TEN TO ONE IN SWEDEN

PADDY SYLVANUS

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NEWPORT, R. I.

WITHDRAWN

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BY

PADDY SYLVANUS

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To

OLD BILL

WHO SUGGESTED THE ADVENTURE

BOOK I

I Set Out

Old Bill suggested the adventure.

"We all need bombing out of our grooves at times. Go and see the world when and how you can—even if it is from the point of view of a governess. It is always interesting to study life from a different angle."

"A governess! I'd as soon go as a cook!"

Old Bill shook her wise grey head.

"They are rich, these Swedes, and generous. They will give you a good time. Besides, my dear, no one looking at you would want to eat a dinner you had cooked."

I laughed ruefully.

"You hit hard, Bill. I am not sure whether that cryptic remark is a compliment or an insult. But I promise you, if Fate kicks me off the English seaboard into Sweden, I'll struggle to do you credit."

The family heard of my plans with ill-concealed relief. They did not want to lose me, but

they hoped I meant to go. For their ease and comfort or for mine? I wonder! Poor relations are best tucked safely away, Sweden being as good a spot as any.

Clarissa cried as I wished her good-bye in her car outside Liverpool Street Station. She said she did not feel equal to facing farewell on the platform. Watkins, the chauffeur, shed his pose of haughty reserve. He pressed my hand and murmured that he would look for my speedy return. Watkins did not approve of my self-imposed exile. He was quite upset about it. Sykes, Mathilda, and I made for the departure platform.

My mind was a blank. The inside of my head felt like moist cottonwool. Some pert little familiar, lurking deep within me, kept on insisting in a high squeaky voice that I couldn't really be going on that far journey—to become a *schoolmarm*. At the last moment Fate would intervene.

Fate—in the form of a tall grim man, whose sombre eyes harboured a sardonic flicker of mirth. Fate would whisk me out of that dark dreary station and rush me through the sordid London streets into the blessed green lanes and open fields, where the bracken was swiftly changing into fronds

of bronze and gold, and the berries of the rowan-trees were glimmering scarlet against the blue mists of autumn.

But the imp was wrong as I knew he would be —knew it in spite of the promptings of idiotic Hope. I sat on in my first-class carriage snowed under in newspapers, magazines, chocolates, with which Sykes had provided me as consolation prizes. No English people were travelling to Sweden. The travellers were mostly Scandinavians, Swedes more especially, with curious flat faces and hard, codfishy eyes.

Mathilda implored me to think better of my wild scheme.

"How can you go off like that! Such a desperate long journey! Not understanding one word of the language! Knowing nothing of the people with whom you are going to live! Absolute strangers! I call it madness, but I must say I admire your pluck!"

"Needs must," I said cheerlessly.

A whistle screeched ominously. A shiver of despair shook me. I wanted to leap on to the platform, to shake my fist at the loathsome train. It

began to glide, to gather way. I clenched my hands and sat still. Sykes flung a small hard wad into my lap. It was a first-class shot.

"Come back at once if you find it impossible!" he shouted above the hissing clamour of the train.

Never shall I forget my first experience of a Swedish *smörgås bord*. Set out on a large round table were all those delicacies which in the circumstances I most disliked! Sardines—of an oiliness! Anchovies—of a saltiness! *Foie-gras*—of a richness! Sausage! Cheese! Omelette! Pork! Gherkins! Smoked salmon!

That luncheon, spread so lavishly in the dining-saloon of the steamer, completely broke down my pose of stolid indifference to whatever might betide. I turned and fled from that laden table, and, seeking out my cabin, I laid myself down very gently, lest worse things might befall me upon my snow-white berth.

I draw the veil of discretion over that awful trip. Persons foolish enough to contemplate adventuring on that heaving, side-slipping passage from Harwich to Gothenburg, unless they are good sailors and love that treacherous grey-green

monster, the sea, should be mercifully put under an anæsthetic before they start.

I lay with closed eyelids, weak and sickening tears of heart-break and misery trickling down my cheeks. Nobody loved me! Nobody wanted me! They were all glad to see the last of me. A sob swelled up in my throat and nearly ended in disaster. After that I lay still. Heart-break vanished, and nausea took over control!

Even a chance meeting with a floating mine could not rouse me from a horizontal position in my berth, though the pandemonium of the shooting-match on deck might have disturbed the slumbers of the famous Seven. It sounded as if vessels of iron were being flung about in all directions. I wondered if war had been declared again and if a submarine was about to sink us. I feebly prayed that it might.

. . . . . .

Like Columbus, I have discovered a new country, a land of length without breadth; miles of gloomy forest; towns built of wood painted all colours of the rainbow. A land where life is hard and faces are sad; or where life is gay and where

faces are powdered; and where strong drink flows on all festive occasions—for those who can afford to buy it.

My "stable-companion," a charming Swedish girl, woke me early on Friday morning. She had proved an angel without wings, bringing me food, washing my face, creeping noiselessly to her berth at night. I believe she undressed in the dark in order not to disturb me. Anyway, she reminded me of the witty monarch's description of the courtier Godolphin. "She was never in the way, and never out of it!"

On this occasion she was both loud and firm.

"You *must* get up!" she said. "We are arriving at Gothenburg. The stewardess says we shall be in in half an hour."

She pushed a tray towards me, set with steaming coffee and rusks. She handed me a handkerchief saturated in eau-de-Cologne and left the cabin.

It was a lovely morning. The northern sky glowed ruddily; islands stood out in black masses against it. Handsome houses crowded down on to the quay. Numerous churches appeared, a canal, and the docks. We were in!

Professorinnan had most kindly arranged that a friend of hers who could speak English fluently should meet me on the quay. My Swedish friend informed me that the boat had arrived three hours before its time. "It has been such an extraordinarily good passage," she added in explanation. I had to take her word for it! I feebly wondered what a really bad passage could be like.

The Swedish girl and a blushing fiancé insisted upon taking my luggage off my hands. They enquired at which hotel I was putting up, and, singling out the porter, consigned my luggage to his care.

The boat usually arrives at Gothenburg just after the early and only train has departed for Stockholm. Therefore, as Professorinnan's appointed guide, philosopher, and friend was not due to arrive on the quay with my ticket and instructions for the further stage of my journey before this train had departed, I was stranded for twenty-four hours before I could resume my journey northwards.

Gradually one by one, or in merry chattering parties, the passengers departed from the boat. I bade my two Swedish friends farewell, and

watched them jog off, feeling sadly neglected and dejected. Finally the only people left on the steamer were the captain and the crew, a certain well-known sporting Swedish count, and one of the bigwigs of the English Legation.

The two men walked up and down the deck chatting together and casting curious glances at my back as I huddled wretchedly in a corner of the boat idly watching the busy scenes on the quay.

The Swedish count was well known to me. I had witnessed his feats of skilled horsemanship over and over again at the horse show. My heart gave a sick throb. Oh! for dear old London in June!

The diplomat I had met in days that were past for ever. I did not *wish* to renew the chance acquaintance. The memory of those rosy days was too bitter to face a living reminder.

They were both "gentlemen of the old school." They were willing and eager to help their fellow-passenger, hitched up on the borders of Sweden, but, my back being turned so persistently, they hesitated to thrust themselves upon me.

Finally the two men departed, and then the captain began to get rattled and to cast suspicious

glances at me. "Was this strange woman never going?" And just as he was about to question me I saw an agitated Swedish lady beckoning frantically from the quay below.

My long vigil was over. *En avant!*

"Hulloa! Hulloa!" The buzzing of a droning voice in my ear tickled me awake.

The second day of my wanderings had dawned —and so fearfully early. The hall-porter was ringing me up, as arranged, so that I might arise in time to catch the train going north, which departs from Gothenburg at seven-seven A.M.!

Galvanised into action by the repeated summons of the bedside telephone, I leapt from my couch. What a grey load of misery and apprehension weighed me down!

Heavens! Why had I ever been such a fool as to start out on such an appalling adventure? Go on I must. I had sworn to see it through.

With leaden feet I descended the stairs. The clerk at the bureau was both deaf and dumb until I handed him over his perquisite of five crowns. This penny-in-the-slot set the inert figure jerking. He roused himself sufficiently to summon the hall-porter, who shouldered my luggage and escorted

me to the railway-station, handing me over to a tongue-tied porter. This mute weighed my luggage in solemn silence, wrote on a piece of paper 13 kr. 75 öre, and held it under my nose. A charge for overweight. I meekly handed over the amount to the official whose job it was to receive it.

This piece of robbery having been satisfactorily concluded, the porter signed to me to follow him and scrambled up into a waiting, snorting train. He led me down a corridor into a comfortable saloon, and, directing my attention to a luxurious armchair drawn up beside a small table, he gave me to understand that they were reserved for my own particular use.

His radiant face when I tipped him well, out of sheer gratitude for being one further stage advanced on my never-ending journey, proved to me that I had overdone it. The porter rearranged my hand-luggage, pressed some railway literature upon me, clicked his heels smartly and departed.

I was alone!

"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept: when we remembered thee, O Sion.

"As for our harps we hanged them up: upon the trees that are therein."

I felt much more like a tree and a rope than a harp.

I wasn't quite alone, after all. A charming girl entered the saloon at this moment, her husband and her small girl with her. They had travelled with me on that dreary journey to Harwich. She had glanced at me once or twice and smiled faintly, but I had been far too hipped to respond.

Now she smiled again, craving for human comfort. I responded amiably. She suggested breakfast together on the train. How I enjoyed that breakfast! The Swedes certainly understand the art of making coffee. My new friend told me so many interesting things that I forgot my sorrows *pro tem.* I sat up and began to take an interest in the pageant of life once more.

While her dark, handsome husband sat absorbed in melancholy reflection, his wife told me about the home of her childhood—Gotland, the "Pearl of the Baltic."

Gotland, once an important centre of the Hanseatic League, is still famous for its ruins of past greatness. She described the wall crowned with thirty-seven towers, the numerous old churches crumbling to decay, among them the stately re-

mains of St. Catherine's, the most beautiful of them all. By the end of breakfast we were both of us far away among the people of that world of long ago.

We heard the monks and nuns chanting softly in the dim aisles of that old temple of God. We saw the ghostly shafts of northern sunshine piercing the gemlike windows of stained glass, casting their radiance upon the bowed heads of pious worshippers.

We saw the sturdy burghers of the Hanseatic League striding high-booted about the town. We caught the hum of trade; we looked on at the bustle of life in one of the most important islands of Europe.

I wanted to go with her on her pilgrimage back to her own particular fairyland. To wander up and down those narrow, twisted streets; to smell the perfume of the roses growing upon the old grey walls in the sunny gardens—those radiant flowers that have helped to bestow upon Visby the lovely name of the "City of Ruins and Roses."

Alas! I had to turn my attention to the prosaic proposition of finding out where I must change my train and which train I must board next.

My new-found Swedish friend came to my assistance. She told me I must change at Hällsberg. As the train slowed down, she bade me good-bye and begged me if I ever called in at Gotland to visit her. She asked her husband to give me one of his cards, and, when the train had vanished into space and I had stopped gazing after it, I looked at the card. To my intense surprise it bore a Turkish inscription. The dark, silent husband was a Turk! Somehow it seemed fitting that a daughter of the fearless wandering Vikings should have united her fortunes with one of the nomads of Asia.

I glanced round at the station. Gloom and desolation hung about it. Rain was falling persistently; in the distance a dog was whining, whining, whining; and I had hours to wait. Hällsberg, to my prejudiced eyes, looked like the End of Beyond. Beetroot-coloured wooden houses, a miry uninviting road. And then the rain! If I went out on a voyage of discovery there would be nothing to discover in such a place. I sank down in the lowest depths of despair, on to a wooden bench, shared by some peasants.

The peasants sat all in a row, toes turned in,

gazing into space. Occasionally one would say something—in a whisper. That was all! Trains came and went. The peasants departed, and others took their place. The leaden hours dragged on.

The rain had stopped. I was frozen to the marrow. I paced up and down the platform. The peasants on their benches sat stolidly regarding me with grave suspicion. I felt I ought to drop a penny in some skilfully-concealed slot and then wind them up. I could picture quite clearly the angular, somewhat clumsy actions that those peasants, suddenly galvanised into action, would perform.

A girl with red hair and intelligent eyes was seated on one of the benches. Her eyes followed me, up and down, and in their depths a question lurked.

I, also, harboured a very insistent query. From which platform did my train depart, and how should I know it when I saw it—in this tongue-tied country?

No one understood a single word of French, German, English, or Italian. No one seemed able to read. When I thrust the name of my next halting-place under their noses, officials and peasants

alike gazed at me sadly or grunted and turned despondently away. I never met such a collection of "Weary Willies." What on earth was I to do?

I had almost decided to leave my affairs in the clutches of the demon Chance. Now I changed my mind. I would have one more try. Perhaps the red-haired damsel had some glimmerings of a lingual talent behind those intent grass-green eyes.

I went up to her and in sheer desperation addressed her in English. She leapt stiffly to her feet, and, to my intense surprise, curtseyed to me. She answered, thank Heaven, in the same tongue, haltingly, but her knowledge was quite sufficient for my purpose.

I explained to her my difficulties; she grasped them at once. Her face lit up. She was going by the same train as the *Fröken*—she meant me, obviously. I heaved a sigh of relief. She could show the *Fröken* her train. In fact it was the one just steaming in!

"Shall we travel together?" I suggested eagerly. She shook her head. "The *Fröken* travels second?" I could see she was genuinely sad about it. I did not flatter myself that her grief was due to the loss of my company. The unshadowed joy of

my family in getting quit of me had stripped me of any pleasant delusion as to any charm I might once have fancied I possessed.

No. This charming Swedish maid was seized by a desire to practise her English conversational powers, and who was I to baulk that very laudable ambition?

I also had an axe to grind. Like one of Mother Carey's disgruntled chickens, I was seeking the shelter of a warm Swedish wing under which I might creep for protection and aid.

"The *Fröken* would not travel third?" she suggested tentatively. The *Fröken,* however, jumped at the suggestion. I had read somewhere that to see the real life of a country one should travel third. The Swedish damsel, smiling and apologetic, led the way into a bare wooden compartment, and we seated ourselves *vis-à-vis* by the window, I with my back to the wooden partition, where I could command the whole of our compartment and could study at my leisure any "life" that might be there to see.

The compartment slowly filled up. Peasants in big black slouch hats. Melancholy recruits thrust into ill-fitting grey uniforms, with unbecoming

grey tricornes perched precariously on their bullet-heads. A few peasant women carrying large baskets, with cloths tied down over their worn, sad faces. One tall peasant in a curious faded green frock-coat, minus a hat, and very drunk.

My little Swedish friend did not see him, as she had her back turned to him. I watched him, wondering if he would prove a nuisance at such close quarters.

The train gave a lurch and started on its way.

My heart felt heavy as lead. I am not fond of my fellow-creatures at the best of times. I hate crowded, stuffy carriages. And, above all, I dislike talking and listening against the rattle and bang of a train. And here I was, interned for goodness knows how long, in a third-class carriage stuffed to suffocation with a horde of distinctly smelly peasants, with every window closed. Added to which, I should have to listen, for hours, to banal small-talk laboriously translated into a mild murder of my own native tongue.

I remembered my hasty promise to Bill. After all, this girl was ready and willing to help a perfect stranger. It was up to me to respond to her hospitable endeavours.

I leant forward and started the English lesson her soul craved.

A small dark youth seated next to my rescuer was immersed in a paper pamphlet. At the first sound of my voice he emerged from his studies.

At the first pause in my hunt for a suitable subject for further conversation he butted in. I was finding some linguists at last!

"The *Fröken* is American!" he stated with some assurance.

"I assure you the *Fröken* is nothing of the kind," I replied stonily.

"Not American! But the *Fröken* speaks English!"

I bit back a hasty retort and explained that I spoke English because it was my native tongue.

"Ah!" he replied. "All good Swedes go to America. England is played out. So the Germans tell us! I am now reading an American tract. I wish to go to America as a preacher. I am Baptist. I will convert the Americans."

"God will reward you, John!" I said piously.

The little man was delighted at my ready approval of his pious purpose, after our first bad start.

"Will the *Fröken* give me also an English lesson—or is the *Fröken* too tired?"

I was tired, goodness knows! But it was sheer idiocy to dwell upon it. I pulled myself together.

"I will give anyone an English lesson who likes to join in," I said heartily. "It will pass the time."

The little man laid aside his tract with an eagerness that was almost pathetic. He translated my offer to the carriage at large. Two sad recruits drifted up to our corner, to my intense amusement, and after a bit one of the most care-worn of the peasants actually joined our group, with a faintly apologetic smile on his strained ascetic face.

The drunkard tried to join us, too. He had been singing, crooning, yelling, and hiccupping, in a far corner. My horror can be imagined as I saw him lurching up the compartment towards us. One long greasy lock flopped across his watery eyes. He put up a hand to push it away and promptly collapsed on the floor.

The crash attracted the attention of the small missionary. He sprang dramatically to his feet, barring the passage of the enormous Swede, who,

having scrambled to his feet, was bearing down on our corner once more.

"The *Fröken* must not be frightened," he said, glancing back over his shoulder. "I will protect her!"

The top of his head reached perhaps to the second waistcoat button of the drunken Swede. But David faced Goliath like a man. He had no sling, it is true, but he had a tongue, and he knew how to use it. A torrent flowed forth. The truculence of the Swede died out of him as the breath escapes from a bladder pig, leaving it limp and flabby. He collapsed, and his friends dragged him back to the hazy, smoke-laden obscurity of his original corner, where they continued to drink and smoke, turning the scanty air into poisonous miasma.

That journey will always stand out by itself as one of the worst nightmares of my life.

The train drew up at last at a collection of wooden shacks—or so it seemed to me, in the light which was beginning to fade—like some town out West. The huddled beginning of a gold rush camp or a lumber town.

The Man of God rose and put a tall hat upon

his head. He had confided to me during our awful journey together that he was studying at a college, but that after work he went about the country preaching.

"I had prepared my sermon," he said, with the quaint dignity that was characteristic of this strange youth. "But now I change it. I shall take for my text the *Fröken* and her friendliness. I have been told by my German friends that the English are hard and haughty and cold. The *Fröken* has undeceived me. She travels third. She is tired, but she teaches us the English language. I have learned much. She is patient and gentle. I shall preach on unselfishness. On the subject of those who help others. I wish the *Fröken* could break her journey and hear my sermon."

He held out his hand over my head and blessed me, and I believe that blessing did me good. Then we shook hands—a real friendly hand-grasp—and he departed.

Gloom fell upon us after he had gone. The English lesson died away into silence. The sad-faced peasant went to sleep—noisily. The recruits sat silent and serious, gazing with dreary

vacuity into some fearful future. The lank-haired drunkard in the corner lolled back helplessly with a slack, ever-open mouth, wagging his head solemnly to the cracked strains of the inevitable concertina, which wheezed out again and again the same queer little tune as if the crazy instrument were quite incapable of rendering any other melody.

The atmosphere grew thicker and thicker. I was beginning to feel that I could endure it no longer, that I should faint or stifle, when the train came gradually to a standstill and my Swedish guide, roused with a start from her uneasy slumbers, wiped the misty window with her sleeve, and, peering out through the peep-hole she had prepared into the dark obscurity beyond, announced with a sudden excitement that we were there, and, hastily collecting her scattered belongings, she hustled me from the reeking, murky carriage out on to the dimly-lit platform.

I should never have brought off that second change successfully without the red-haired damsel's aid. We had to line up, one behind the other, and await the pleasure of some pompous little Jack-in-office hidden away behind a wooden shut-

ter. A white paper that had been thrust upon me in the Rese bureau at Gothenburg had to be exchanged here for a ticket for a sleeping-berth.

And here a regular Jacob, with *Deutschland-uber-Alles* manners and elbows to correspond, flung himself violently into the queue and forced his way through the patiently waiting crowd as far as where I stood—but not one inch farther. The wee Man of God had described me as gentle and patient. I had wondered, at the time, how many of those who knew me well would have endorsed that rash statement.

Now I faced the supplanter. I was weary to death, dirty, exhausted, and on the border-line of sanity. Jacob got from me what he had been asking for all his life. He slunk back appalled; even his thick hide was pierced; and over the faces of the crowd, sad, intent, resigned, there flickered the shadow of an appreciative smile.

The Swedish damsel was taken aback at my temerity. I gather, in Sweden, that a man, however much of a cad, is regarded as a matter of course as a demi-god. That point of view is frankly impossible to me. I am afraid that I shall not be popular.

My self-appointed guide informed me that I had secured the last sleeping-berth available. (Thank God, sharp-elbowed Jacob would have to sit up all night!) She also informed me that we had better make a dash for it, as the Jack-in-office had taken so long fooling round before he condescended to open his wicket that he had held up the queue unduly, and the train—*my* train—was on the point of departure.

I caught it with one wild leap as it began to glide out of the station. A fatherly guard dragged me aboard, reproving me severely for my rashness—or it sounded like that. Someone tried to board behind me, trying to force me off. I landed out with a vigorous kick, and the something—it felt soft and squashy—fell back with a groan. I was filled with cheer to think that Jacob had missed first his sleeping-berth and then his train and on each occasion through my unaided efforts. But hadn't I promised Bill to do thoroughly all I undertook?

The guard led me along a dark corridor and pitchforked me into an even darker railway carriage. I groped about helplessly for the light, and finally the occupant of the lower berth stretched

out a hand and switched it on—with a grunt. I thanked her, and, after a hasty toilette, I clambered up to my berth and fell asleep out of sheer exhaustion, in spite of the stifling heat of the compartment.

Could I survive, I wondered drowsily, in a country where fresh air was regarded as a penal offence?

The next morning I awoke to find the compartment empty. The other occupant had dressed and departed. Thank goodness for that mercy! I was still in the cami-petticoat stage, attempting to brush the dust and dirt accumulated during my journey out of my hair, when the carriage door burst violently open and the fatherly guard appeared. We stared open-mouthed at one another. He scrutinised closely my scanty garments, smiling a quite friendly approval. Suddenly he changed abruptly into his most official manner and barked something at me. It sounded like a command. I shrugged my shoulders and went on vigorously brushing my hair.

The guard dived out of the carriage, leaving the door wide open, and, before I could close it, plunged back again. At his heels a grey-haired

lady appeared. Vaguely I recognised her as the occupant of the lower berth last night. She informed me coldly in German that I must be quick about my toilette. The compartment must be transformed into an ordinary railway-carriage before we reached the next stop—which was imminent!

I seized the opportunity to enquire as to breakfast prospects. She told me there was no restaurant car on the train.

Seeing my look of despair—for I was wambling with emptiness—she relented sufficiently to inform me that at the next stop there was a refreshment-room where I could obtain something to eat and drink though I gathered from her manner that wild horses could not drag her High-and-Mightiness into such a hole.

If I were prepared to wait, she added, the car in which I was travelling would be hitched on to another train going north, and in course of time a *Mittag-essen* would be prepared.

In course of time! In course of time I should be a corpse. Hole or no hole, I was going to feed at the next stop. I had only felt equal to tackling breakfast the day before. What with the sea

voyage, excitement, anxiety, and fatigue, combined with bad air and lack of opportunity, I had eaten nothing since.

Directly the train stopped, I clambered feebly down and crawled after the passengers who were making for the eating-house. It was hot and stuffy and packed with people, mostly third-class passengers. But, studying closely the antics of my fellow-creatures, I seized upon a steaming mug of coffee and piled up a small plate with everything into which I could dig a fork. I buttered slabs of brittle rye-biscuit, and it seemed to me the most delicious thing I had ever tasted. I ate steadily until I noticed that my fellow-passengers were glancing at their watches and paying for their food. I did likewise and stepped back into the train with renewed vitality.

Once more we lumbered on, past rivers and lakes, waterfalls and forests. Past huddled wooden houses dumped down anywhere, painted red and blue and green. I travelled now in lonely state. There was but a scanty handful of passengers on the train, and no one intruded on my anxious solitude. When luncheon was announced, I joined the procession wending its staggering way

to the refreshment-car. By the time I appeared the car was nearly full, and the waiter, with an insolent smirk, jerked out a chair for me opposite a Japanese gentleman. I say "gentleman" advisedly. For I, tired and touchy, declined to sit in the place the waiter indicated. I demanded a table to myself. At first the waiter smiled superciliously; then, finding that he had to do with a woman in a devil of a temper, he wilted visibly and said there was no other table to be had.

Too tired to argue, I sank into the chair, champing with rage.

The Japanese gentleman, who had listened to the argument with an impassive face, suddenly addressed the waiter. He told him not to stand there grinning, but to get a move on and bring the lady food. Couldn't he see she was tired and wanted a good dinner?

He spoke in German, the waiter's native tongue. The waiter departed with a shrug, and the meal was consumed in silence. Everything I wanted appeared under my hand. Silently, indifferently, but indefatigably, my opposite neighbour attended to my needs.

When the last course had been served he rose,

bowed, and departed noiselessly, like a wraith. I smiled my grateful thanks, but that smile met with no response. I must say I felt thoroughly ashamed of my behaviour, and that the gentleman from Japan had scored.

The waiter reaped the benefit. The charge for the *Mittag-essen* was 5 kr. 50 öre. Ten per cent., I had been told, was the correct tip to give. I planked down 50 öre. The waiter regarded it with glassy eyes and then demanded more. My Oriental protector had departed. The waiter was a feeble psychologist. I put out my hand. He extended his. I suppose he imagined that a lone, lorn woman in a strange land was his fair prey. With my hand still extended, I stared at him. A staring-match ensued. I was so tired I could have gone on staring for ever. The waiter shifted his feet, changed colour, fiddled with his collar, looked away. Then he looked down on the table and stared aghast. So taken aback was he that I had sailed out of the restaurant-car before he recovered. The 50 öre had disappeared. One emaciated English farthing lay in its place. Honours again were easy.

BOOK II

I Arrive

The guard had told me to change at L——, and I had not understood. Had I gone on I should have landed in the wilds of Lapland.

Professorinnan had decided to come to meet me, to help me with my last change of train. It was as well she did. I understood no word of Swedish, and farther up the line there is no accommodation for stray passengers. Some peasant might have taken pity on me, but I should in all probability have had to spend the night sitting on a hard bench on the platform. There was no train back that day.

She had walked through my train looking for me. She had consulted the guard, and he had assured her no Englishwoman was on the train.

Why he suddenly pounced upon me as the missing link, I shall never know. But Professorinnan is an important personage in L——, and someone had to be produced to pacify her. Hence his sudden onslaught on my hand-luggage.

Max, the eldest son, met us with a car. He came forward as the train drew up, his velvet cap set jauntily on his head, clicking his heels together and bowing stiffly from the back of his neck. The trunk, which I had last seen at Gothenburg, appeared out of space, in spite of all the changes, and up to time.

We got into the motor and it dashed off, cutting corners and chasing pedestrians into byways as if Jehu himself were at the wheel.

"We do not live in the town; we live outside," Professorinnan explained.

Through a small commercial town we dashed, its broad streets planted with trees, behind which large, two-storeyed wooden houses, painted all colours of the rainbow, but mostly beetroot, rose starkly from the sidewalk.

We crossed over a bridge on to a *chausée;* dreary fields lay on one side of the road; the river lay on the other. Isolated wooden houses were jotted down anyhow along the road. Away to the north stretched the forest as far as the eye could see—and much farther.

We turned into a gate by a lodge and up a long drive to a white stone house. On the steps were

collected a small crowd of boys—my future pupils.

To my weary brain the introductions were merely a jumble of clicking heels and dislocated jerkings from the back of the neck.

I was taken straight to my room. Professorinnan asked me to be as quick as possible.

"The children dine with us at three-thirty on Sunday; it is now nearly five, and they are so hungry!"

I dashed some cold water over my hands and face, dabbed at my hair with a brush, hastily slipped into a clean blouse, and opened my door to prospect.

A babel of voices came from the next room—my bed-sitting-room is on the ground floor. Guided by the sound, I approached delicately. Professorinnan met me on the threshold.

The room was crowded—or so it appeared to me. There seemed no end to the swarming mass of boys of all sizes and descriptions.

Among them skipped and pranced a most beautiful little girl. Her golden hair was bobbed and curled inwards round her head, framing her face in a casque of gold. Her large eyes were the colour of delphiniums. Her small, determined mouth was an unblown rosebud. Her bare arms were white and smooth and dimpled distractingly. Her limbs were so well formed that every one of her restless movements had the grace of a Russian dancer. She was a joy to contemplate. My eyes returned to rest upon her again and again.

In the background, half concealed behind a curtain, stood a girl in the early twenties. A mass of Titian red hair was wound picturesquely about her head. She was slim and elegantly shaped; but what struck me and arrested my attention was her face. It was the face of one who has given

up hope of any possible joy in life—hugging a morbid acceptance of a fate she deems inevitable.

Professorinnan signed to her come forward. Heaving a deep sigh, the girl obeyed.

"This is Karin," Professorinnan said. "She is a relative of ours and has come up north to cook for us."

I glanced at her small white hands as she bent her knee resignedly in a graceful curtsey. I wondered whether Bill would have made the same cryptic remark about her powers of cooking that she had made about mine. Karin looked far too fragile and dainty—and hopeless—to act as commissariat officer for this enormous family party.

She stood in the bare shining room, her gorgeous hair gleaming against a background of tall palms, her small feet planted forlornly upon the highly polished parquet floor; and behind her a startling futuresque picture worthy of Picasso at his weirdest added its incongruous note to the scene.

The girl obviously had a history. My interest was aroused. I wondered what it was. My eyes travelled back to Professorinnan. Was she being unkind to her relative? I wondered. I met the shrewd grey-green eyes fixed intently upon me.

Professorinnan made a movement forward. "Shall we go in to dinner?" she purred. "The children are so hungry. They have waited for their dinner so long!"

Her tone conveyed a nettled impatience at the lateness of the dinner-hour, which was absurd. I could not be held responsible for the train arriving when it did, nor for the few extra moments I had snatched for a hasty toilette. After all, I had been travelling for nearly five days. What I really wanted was a hot bath and a quiet bed.

The folding-doors opposite me slid back along their grooves. The dining-room stood revealed.

The memory of that first dinner is more or less dim to me. I remember that I was handed a dish piled up with the most enormous sections of lobster. Everyone took a section. My inside swerved away from lobster, for I was tired and sick and replete from the substantial meal I had consumed on the train. But I realised that the laws of hospitality must be respected. I toyed with that lobster. Beefsteak *à la maître d'hôtel* followed. We ended on the note of caramel pudding.

After coffee in the salon I retired thankfully to my room to unpack.

My weary brain worked round and round like a squirrel in a cage. It occurred to me that I had not seen the Professor I had heard so much about. Where was the bearded father of all this horde of boys and of that one perfectly fascinating if somewhat aloof small girl? . . . How was I ever going to cope with all those boys?

Oh dear! Why had I undertaken so preposterous a post? Should I escape before it was too late? But Swedish trains were such weird and elusive things—run at inconvenient hours. I must find out how often they ran and at what hour or if they ever ran at all away from this horrible, depressing Back of Beyond.

At eight o'clock footsteps came click-clacking down the corridor. They stopped at my door, and there was a sharp business-like rap on the panel. With a sigh almost as weary as Karin's I hurried towards the door, calling out: "Please come in!" It opened, and Professorinnan stood on the threshold.

"Will you come to supper," she said, "and then you had better have a hot bath and go to bed."

I followed my hostess out of the room, along the corridor, and up some stairs. We emerged

into a wide hall, with two imposing high-backed chairs set one on each side of a round table. White-painted chairs were scattered about, as if a small army had just risen and taken flight.

There was no one else there except Karin. She was presiding at the *smörgås bord.*

There was the same assortment of little dishes, with indigestible morsels on them, that had confronted me on board ship: a large silver basket filled with slabs of hard rye biscuit; and on a small table, placed close against the wall, an electric toaster, on which Karin was toasting thin slices of white bread an appetising golden brown.

We ended our supper with cheese cut in knife-thin slices spread on the biscuit.

Cups of very weak tea were handed round, into which we poured thick yellow cream.

Supper over, I rose and made my excuses. Professorinnan showed me where to find the bathroom. We shook hands, and I turned to depart.

"My husband is ill," were her last words to me. "He is naturally anxious to make your acquaintance. I must ask you to visit him to-morrow."

It was the queerest bathroom.

There was a large roller up in the ceiling upon which to hang clothes. Lower down a rail was suspended. Here eight enormous bath-towels swayed gently to and fro.

Across the stove a cord was fastened, and from it dangled eight face-gloves. But the floor was the masterpiece. It was overlaid with pieces of wood fastened together about one inch apart. Brooches, safety-pins, hair-pins, vanished from view when dropped. I spent most of my bath-time grovelling on hands and knees, trying to salvage several of my most precious possessions.

On pulling a long brass chain, the waste-water swirled over the floor beneath the wooden grating, and the electric light was reflected in it, like the glimmering of the moon beneath an old rustic bridge.

Oh! How thankful I was to creep into a luxurious bed, clean, warmed, well fed, and dog-weary.

My First Day

October.

Utter loneliness and desolation.

Breakfast at seven-thirty! Heavens! I feel like the matutinal goat that was secured by the early tiger! What a nation. It seems a national habit to rise before the world has been well aired. *Seven-thirty!* Enough to give anyone the blues! Professorinnan tapped briefly on my door as she marched past.

All hopes of breakfast in my room have vanished. I thought it was a universal habit on the Continent to start the day in a well-chosen solitude. Must I really strive to be pleasant—at seven-thirty A.M.? May the kind gods intervene!

It was not breakfast—as we understand breakfast as a nation. It was coffee.

A beautifully hand-drawn cloth was spread upon the table. A few cups and saucers were strewn about. A charming maid entered briskly from one of the many doors leading into the dining-

room. As her eye met mine she stopped dead, curtseyed demurely, and then advanced upon me, coffee-pot in hand. She half filled my cup with thick black coffee, while Professorinnan pushed towards me a handsome silver sugar-box and a heavy cream jug. A flat, brown, shiny object lay on a platter. Professorinnan picked up a long, narrow, saw-edged knife and shaved wafer-like slices off the loaf. She pushed the platter towards me, and I picked up a wafer. I was hungry, and somehow, at that moment, a solid English breakfast seemed to me the acme of earthly bliss.

I could have polished off the whole loaf with ease. . . . My portion of it, two wafers of thin sweet bread—with no butter!

Professorinnan and I lingered over our early coffee. She had had an English governess when a girl, and she spoke the language remarkably well. I believe I shall like her and that we shall get on well together. There is no humbug about her. She is absolutely downright and natural. She told me about her home-life; about Swedish manners and customs. She deplored the fact that I had arrived in Sweden just as winter was about to set in.

"Had you come in summertime," she said regretfully, "you would have got so much better an impression of Sweden. Soon the weather will break, and there will probably be a fortnight's rain. Then the snow will come, and winter will be here. There is much to compensate those who are fond of outdoor life in the winter. Ski-ing, sledging, ice-yachting, etc. And this winter, as it happens, the Northern Games will be held in Stockholm. As you are English and fond of games, that will interest you. We must take you to Stockholm to see the fun."

That was nice of her, I thought.

At ten-fifteen my first pupil arrives! I shall never grasp the intricacy of their school hours. All I know, at present, is that they go off at seven-thirty and mysteriously reappear about ten. Then, judging from my lesson schedule, they must depart again some time after breakfast at eleven and return at three.

The next lesson comes on at three-fifteen.

Dinner at four, and then two more lessons at five and five-forty.

In the intervals, I am supposed to babble English to all and sundry.

Professorinnan took me for a walk into the town this morning. I never saw anything to equal the clearness of the atmosphere. The sun seems so much nearer and lower down in the sky. We went along by the river, and the sun shot its level rays right across the island. The mountains to the south looked black and threatening. Northwards stretched the forest for hundreds of miles, mysterious and grim.

We did some shopping. The girls behind the counter curtsey as we enter and leave the shop. Professorinnan, as an acknowledgement of their salutation, drops her head stiffly from the back of her neck.

She reminds me of a drooping sunflower jerked about by an impudent zephyr!

The flappers all curtsey in the street to the older ladies of their acquaintance. There is no humbug about it. One knee almost touches the ground.

The men take their hats off, and, holding them at arm's length, look intently at the person they are greeting. They never smile. To smile would

be considered bad form. Such a gloomy form of salutation!

I do not think that *I* shall ever smile again.

All the same, I was amused. Our walk, I suspect, was a triumphal march for Professorinnan. She told me that the betting in the town was against her decoying an "English miss" up to this God-forsaken, dreary northern town. She even, delicately, hinted that I was not at all what she had expected to see. Something more demure, apparently, more dowdy, more resigned—perhaps, more deprecating!

I caught her glancing sideways, and with appreciation, at my immaculately cut tweeds, my silk and wool stockings, my willow-calf brogue shoes.

"You English are so practical," she said half enviously, "even in your clothes."

A hand stole out; she fingered and closely scrutinised my coat-sleeve.

"We never see stuff such as that in Sweden," she said.

I should imagine that in our walk we practically covered the whole small town and that Professorinnan had timed her promenade to coincide with

the fashionable shopping hour. She seemed to me to greet everyone, and the streets were littered with young girls flopping down on one knee. I might have been taking an airing with a scion of some Royal House.

As the *Frökens* curtseyed demurely, they glanced up under their eyelashes with an expression of veiled insolence. I did not take very kindly, this morning, to the Swedish flapper. Bold and hard, they seemed to me. The older women glanced side-long. They meant to have a good look at the strange importation, but not to flatter Professorinnan's proud sense of possession of an "English miss" by too openly revealing their curiosity.

. . . . . .

Three-fifteen. Max arrives.

There is a smart tap on my door. I cry out, "Come in!"

Max enters. He clicks his heels together and bows on the threshold. Walks up to me, clicks and bows again. I bow gracefully (I hope) in acknowledgement of his courteous salutations. Max seats himself at my table, whips out a book from

his pocket, and begins to read, with an excruciating accent, about the "cat that walked on its own wild lone."

I, tactfully, correct only about every other word at first, carefully following in the book to see what it is all about, but even every other word makes Max restive.

. . . . . .

Four o'clock dinner. Professorinnan talks English to me. The boys are on their best behaviour. They sit bolt upright on their chairs, twiddling their fingers, and when they think they are unobserved, they glance stealthily at one another and indulge in sudden, spasmodic, and fearsome grimaces.

Torsten is the only one who has the faintest idea of the intricacies of the English language. I recognise a word here and there when he addresses me, curtly, in English.

The other boys look on, dumb with admiration, holding their breath at his temerity. A clever boy, Torsten, but looks sarcastic and impish. Max, I should say, has more solid qualities and is honest to the bone.

Matthias at five. Sigvard at five-forty.

At six-fifteen Professorinnan taps at my door.

"Please will you go to my husband? You know already where is his bedroom? Through the hall to the right!"

She shows not the faintest intention of accompanying me. On the contrary, she proceeds doggedly on her way towards the kitchen.

Much as I think I shall like Professorinnan, I am conscious of a hostile attitude lurking far down beneath her unruffled surface. She has already, quite unwittingly, revealed that her sympathies in the war lay entirely with Germany. I feel that I shall constantly be put to the proof, and that I must strive in my humble person to keep the dear old flag flying proudly.

I believe she half expects me to blush or falter, so that she may think I am a prudish-minded "miss."

Refreshing thoughts of a rather turbulent past well up into my mind. A broad smile of amusement suddenly flickers across my lips. Professorinnan, taking my silence for irresolution, glances triumphantly round, only to catch me re-

garding her back with a broad and radiant grin. The first time I have smiled since I left Liverpool Street Station.

For one moment she looks ruffled and annoyed. Then—for Professorinnan has been crowned by the gods with that very perfect gift, a sense of humour—she smiles broadly and grasps the tip of her nose delicately between her thumb and first finger. This characteristic gesture indicates that Professorinnan is enjoying a delicate situation. I curtsey to her in mock humiliation and stroll away towards the staircase.

Will a Swede brought up to mannerisms and a strict etiquette continue to put up with my free and easy ways?

I shrug my shoulders and go slowly upstairs and across the deserted hall.

Outside the door, which is standing ajar as if expecting a visitor, I take a deep breath. I do hate a man with a beard—and in bed. Ugh! Then I knock boldly.

A friendly voice bids me "*Komme herein.*" I am about to see face-to-face the hirsute lady-killer.

I pushed the door wider open and entered the bedroom.

On the bed, facing the door, propped up on pillows, lay what at first glance I took to be a very handsome boy. His eyes were dancing merrily, and one long, thin, clever hand was held out in eager greeting. I knew at once we should get on. His first words helped to cement our friendship.

"Good-bye!" he said fervently, giving my hand the grip of a true pal. "Good-bye! *Välkommen.* Good-bye!"

He wore a wonderful linen night-shirt. I never saw gathers so beautifully stroked in. It was hemstitched in red. My eyes wandered back to his clever, clean-shaven face. I smiled back at him.

"Ought I to curtsey to you?" I asked jestingly. "And why good-bye?"

He looked alarmed. Mutual explanations took place in German. The Professor had always believed that "Good-bye" was the politest form of English greeting.

When he had recovered from the effect of this *faux pas,* the Professor enquired anxiously as to

my journey. Had I had a good journey? Had Sweden received me with open arms?

I nearly replied: "With open maws!" remembering that looted 13 kr. 75 öre. But that would have been ungracious. I replied instead that Sweden had treated me well, but seemed to be curiously lacking in the gift of tongues!

This remark irked the Professor. He said he did not understand it. Each boy in every school in the land was taught English, French, and German. Many of those who failed to pass their "student-examination" took up work on the railway.

"Ah! That explains it!" I replied. "They must have been ploughed over their languages. I thought every Swede was a born linguist. Alas! my supposition was incorrect."

The Professor seemed so hipped about it—hurt, perhaps, in his national pride—that I proceeded to cheer him up with a recital of my adventures in the train.

When I related my experience with the Baptist missionary and the sermon that resulted from it, he laughed till he nearly cried. "But this constitutes a record!" he insisted. "Surely there is no

one else in the whole of Europe who has inspired the text of a sermon before he has passed forty-eight hours in a foreign land. I feel proud already of my 'English miss'! This is a good omen.

"You are not like the 'English miss' one has pictured," he went on naïvely. "You have not got great fierce teeth or strained-back hair."

I laughed in turn and shook my head. "Believe me," I said, "she does not exist except in the imagination of some who do not know us—or in cartoons."

At this moment Karin tapped at the door, ushering in the doctor. I rose to depart.

"Come again soon," the Professor said, "when this beast has gone who hurts me. It is dull to be in bed. A little change of thought is good!"

. . . . . .

When I scurried in to second breakfast this morning, accompanied by my pupil of the moment, I found the doctor already installed. Karin sat opposite him, sad and demure, scarcely raising her eyes from her plate except to attend to the needs of the younger children, which she seemed to know by some uncanny sixth sense.

I noticed that the eyes of the young doctor returned again and again to Karin's flower-like face. Once, after a furtive peep, I caught the eagle eye of the Professor. He winked at me knowingly and inclined his head almost imperceptibly in the direction of his niece. One eyebrow shot up and down again.

"The 'English miss' is very observant," he remarked at large to the company assembled. "There is not much that escapes her. I believe it!"

Professorinnan awoke suddenly from one of her deep fits of abstraction. She glanced at me from under her eyelids and then round the crowded table. She said nothing. Professorinnan believes that speech is golden and that one should not squander it!

The young doctor glanced at me suspiciously. He saw that the Professor and I were sharing some jest, and, with the self-consciousness of his race, he felt sure that he must be the butt. His eyes met mine with a challenge in them; but I had assumed my poker-expression, and his gimlet eyes failed to penetrate behind the mask. They travelled on swiftly to the Professor. The latter was briskly rubbing his nose. He met the questioning

glare with eyes that still danced mirthfully. "Have some beer?" he said and signed to Karin to supply the needs of the visitor.

With an air of utter unself-consciousness, Karin rose, sighed, and, fetching a bottle, placed it, with a curtsey, beside the doctor's plate. The latter dropped his head as if he had suddenly broken his neck and said in a staccato voice, "*Tack!*"

The refrain of a song from *San Toy* floated into my mind:

> *My infant joys were centred in*
> *A nodding Chinese Mandarin.*

But it was more than a nod; it was a fracture!

Wooden though he is, I believe he is really in love with Karin, and I don't blame him. A dull red flush stole up from the region of his collar and spread slowly over his face, tingling up among the roots of his hair. I wonder he didn't spring to his feet and click. Sheer silent adoration must have held him motionless.

. . . . . .

Oh dear! How tired I am; but I swore a solemn oath to write up my diary every night.

Dinners, in Sweden, are the very ——! I mean, they are a bit of a trial. They begin at six and go on to twelve or one.

I must not complain, however!

What rich Englishman, on engaging a Swedish lady to teach his children, would give a swagger dinner-party in her honour?

I wonder!

In Sweden, money, or lack of it, makes no difference. Everybody works, and works hard. The person who is really looked down upon is the drone—the one who idles while others work. Money is an accident, like birth, or an acquisition; there are many things in Sweden more highly prized, and snobbishness is unknown, except, perhaps, in the army.

So the Colonel of the Guards' Cavalry Regiment is invited to dinner, and, hearing that I am the English governess, he catches my eye from his seat as honoured guest on Professorinnan's right, raises his glass to his top waistcoat button, bows, says "*Skål,*" bows, and smiles again.

I do likewise. I have been well instructed. No lady may touch her glass in Sweden until someone raises his glass to her and says, "*Skål.*" "*Skål*" is

a pagan survival. The old Scandinavians had a perverse custom of drinking their mead out of the skulls of their enemies.

They chatted Swedish all round me. I did not understand a word. We ate, off and on, most of the evening. I feel, just at present, that I never want to see any food again; and when we were not munching fruit, nuts, chocolates, cakes, etc., we danced and played bridge.

The Mayor's wife, a strikingly handsome woman—it was a clear case of Beauty and the Beast—was master of the ceremonies. They danced all kinds of weird set dances, and finally the Swedish dance, a great favourite at all children's parties in my youth. They sang as they danced. Apparently it is the song the shoemaker sings as he makes his shoe, and the different figures in the dance represent the various stages a shoe goes through before it is finished.

The Swedes have so many pretty, old-world customs. After dinner, each guest goes up to the hostess and thanks her. The ladies curtsey as they shake hands, and the men bow and kiss her hand. I caught Professorinnan's eye. She looked as if their moustaches were tickling her horribly.

The Mayor's wife is the gymnastic mistress in the girls' school here: no wonder she knows every step of their intricate national dances. Even after matrimony (and to be the Mayor's wife is cutting rather a dash), when a woman has no children she takes on work outside her home. Such an energetic race!

. . . . . .

My pupils are so polite, which enchants me. I do so love good manners. They help to make the difficult wheel of life slip round easily. The door opens, a click of heels, and a bow, stiffly from the back of the neck. Three steps forward, the motion is repeated. The table is reached—a third bow. I almost expect the guns to crash forth a royal salute.

I did not know a word of Swedish when I came here, so I made the boys read my native tongue to me and pulled them up at every other word. Now they translate Swedish into English after I have plodded through the lesson first privately with the aid of a dictionary.

It sounds so easy to accept a post to teach English to young Swedish boys, but the subjects I have

to be wise about! Astronomy, chemistry, Latin, botany, biology, zoology, anatomy, etc. They trip me up if I do not hit the nail on the head every time. Alas! I nearly always land on the point instead!

Education seems to me lamentably complete in Sweden, and the boys take to it like young ducks to water. I am like the old hen who brought the brood up by mistake—I can only stand on the bank and cluck.

Fairy-tales about storks and pyramids and Egypt—the longing of the ice-bound north for sun and glow, colour and mystery. Old legends; tales of Viking deeds; shoddy trash of the present day. We hunt through them all on our chase after the subtleties of the English language.

The Swedish Pioneers

The pioneers up north—for there are pioneers here, just as there were in America—have a hard struggle for existence. In America they had to wrestle with the Red Indian; here they have to cope with unending forest and icy cold, and the blinding, remorseless snow. The forests are enormous. They extend for hundreds of miles up to the northern borders—miles and miles of larch and fir and pine, dark, gloomy, impenetrable, with treacherous bogs and swamps. When a farmer has too many sons, the younger ones just take themselves off away up north if they do not emigrate. They drain the bogs, clear a bit of forest, and start a desperate fight against nature and poverty and icy isolation.

In the old days, prowling wolves and bears added to the horrors of it all. Think how terrifying it must have been! The poor wives and children. They had to keep the wolf from the door—in more senses than one.

The people from up-beyond are a type apart. They have gaunt, haunted faces and melancholy eyes. They live, some of them, quite alone, and hardly ever speak. If they are very ill and have to be brought down to hospital, they peak and pine, away from their desolate homesteads, and it is best to do what is necessary and then to send them back to their homes or they may turn their faces to the wall and die out of sheer homesickness. It is a real disease; they call it Lapland sickness. These poor whites have not much stamina, their chief food being the potato.

Twenty years ago, when national schools in Sweden were still in their infancy, the school-mistress—usually a farmer's daughter—had often to live in a tiny hut in one of these gloomy forests at the nearest point to two or three scattered settlements, a rallying-centre for the children.

Living quite alone, with no one within call, the girl teacher, young and nervous, was at the mercy of any wandering ruffian. The fear of this fate and the utter loneliness of the life often drove the girl mad.

. . . . . .

Never within the memory of man has there been such weather in Sweden. Already well on towards Christmas, and the winter still tarries. Twice her icy finger has touched us, and twice it has been swiftly withdrawn.

I had been warned about the winter. Told to take with me my warmest furs, my thickest and heaviest boots. I had been advised to take electric torches and a large supply of fillers. "It is always pitch black in Sweden—polar bears walk about the streets!"

Now, as I write at my table at two-fifteen P.M., darkness is creeping over the land, and along the walk by the river a gorgeous sunset will be flaming over the plains to the south and the dark range of hills beyond, throwing curious orange lights on to the pine-trees, faintly powdered with snow, and reminding me vividly of a highly-coloured Christmas-card of long years ago.

Since I came up here in the last days of September there has been a long succession of blue and golden days, one after another, and the clearness of the northern atmosphere makes the colouring seem all the more wonderful.

"This weather cannot go on!" my hostess de-

clares. "It must start raining soon, and it will rain for a fortnight on end. Make the most of the weather now."

And one day the rain really did come. The dreariness of these grey northern plains! I stood at my window and wondered how I could survive such a change from my blue and golden days, and for a whole fortnight! What a prospect!

But the next day the sun shone out again. . . .

And then came the snow. We had been out to a *smörgås* supper in the town. The cold on that drive home in an open sledge under the wonderful stars, twinkling blue and green and yellow, had a quality that took my breath away. I huddled down among the furs and felt thankful that the drive would be a short one.

The next morning I woke to a world draped in white and to a sun that seemed just level with my eyes as I sat, half blinded, at second breakfast.

Sometimes the loneliness of this life seems *too* overwhelming. I feel I must scream or run or commit a murder. I *won't* allow myself to think. Thought is too dangerous.

My past is past! I have no intention of brooding over it or allowing it in any way to poison the

present. I chat with the Professor and sit to learn wisdom at the feet of wise Professorinnan, for whom I cherish a warm affection—on the whole!

Some of her characteristics irk and annoy me. But considering our temperaments—as much in opposition as an Evangelical is to High Churchman—we hit it off wonderfully. And she is the soul of tact. Never interfering. Allowing me absolute personal freedom.

I romp with the smaller fry and take an intelligent interest in everything the elder boys have to tell me about men, matters, and things. I have learnt a lot. I shall probably learn much more. When blue devils get too firm a hold, I start off on a long lonely tramp up the road that jogs on unendingly towards the wilds of Lapland. I return dead-beat—but victorious.

BOOK III

November 1st

I SPENT my morning in the Professor's big room helping Professorinnan to dust his books. I dipped into some of them; they looked interesting.

When I first arrived at ——, I asked Professorinnan what my duties were exactly. She said "I only ask three things. Teach my family to speak and to understand English. Make your bed on Sunday, and promise me never to try to speak Swedish. Otherwise you may do as you like."

Afterwards, in the social life I led in Sweden, I found the fulfillment of my promise entailed certain hardships. Professorinnan one day reproving me for not taking sufficient interest in her country to learn the language, I reminded her of my promise.

She shrugged her shoulders and said: "Oh, well, I never expected you to keep it. You English are so impossible!"

I wandered up the long road after second breakfast to get the dust from the books out of my

throat. Near the big lake a huge car came hustling down. The chauffeur stopped and offered me a lift, which I accepted. We drove on, past the hospital, past the Professor's house. How was I, knowing no Swedish, to tell him where to put me down? Just for fun I sat tight. The chauffeur kept on glancing at me. Finally, believing that he had brought upon himself the burden of an Old Man of the Mountain, he asked me point-blank where I wanted to go. I held up my hand majestically, stopped the car, and stepped out—opposite the police-station. The owners of the car exchanged glances, half of relief, half of curiosity. They wondered who in the world they had picked up.

November 18th

Torsten in bed to-day. He looks such a wise, wizened shrimp in bed. He showed me his herbarium. Flowers carefully dried, pressed, and beautifully arranged.

Max came in from school, and, after bowing and clicking, flung himself into his lordly arm-

chair and regarded us both with a smile of cynical amusement.

"What's the joke, Max?" I enquired. He blushed, hesitated, and then blurted out in his honest, schoolboy way:

"To see Torsten make polite! I feel it must hurt him much!"

Monday, November 22nd

We had crabs for dinner—loaded-up dishes full of them. We smashed them up with nut-crackers. Basins of hot water, towels, and Pears' soap were arranged in the pantry. We retired at intervals and washed our hands.

Tuesday, November 23rd

Torsten has spent six weeks in Germany just lately. He tells me that the Berlin shops are stocked with ties and scarfs bearing the regimental colours of the British Army.

During the war, young bloods in Germany noted the sartorial smartness of our officers in this respect in the prisoners' camps. Imitation being the sincerest flattery, these dudes now sport our regimental colours and fancy themselves tremendously.

Wednesday, November 24th

Torsten loud in praise of Sinn Fein.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing! Ideas on the subject injected by a comic fool at his school, who masquerades as a master.

Friday, November 26th

Another dinner party.

Another Colonel of yet another Guards' Regiment and his wife—both quite dull. A gymnastic mistress who wore a chaste little evening frock of blue, purple, and yellow check, no sleeves to her frock—and such arms!—flaming red cheeks, and

hair brushed straight back from a bumpy brow. Also a *ryttmästare* with nigger blood in his veins. He danced all the negroid dances beautifully with the gymnast.

Sunday, November 28th

We started off to look for a good site for a summer cottage up the river.

We walked for miles, first through the forest, of course, then along a railway embankment, then along a bumpy, stony road in course of preparation.

We finally struck the trail through the forest again and began to catch glimpses through the firs and spruce of small, brightly-coloured wooden chalets nestling among the trees.

The simple life is lived in these summer cottages with a vengeance. You do your own cooking during the week-end or bring a hamper of cold food with you. The family arrive in the necessary motor-boat, and they sleep two or three in a bed, the rest scattered around on the floor!

With a Swede's love for housework, it seems to me the whole week-end might be spent polishing,

dusting, putting tidy, and cooking, etc.—and they call it pleasure!

We studied the architectural effects minutely. Chose a style with a loggia and a verandah and had our lunch in a sheltered spot.

Then we turned homewards.

It was an appalling walk. A bitter north-east blast was blowing. I wore a pair of fur-lined gloves, and I carried a muff; still my hands resembled painful lumps of ice. My nose and eyes streamed. My handkerchief froze to the consistency of a board in my pocket, and my poor nose was scarlet and felt quite raw—and then a snowstorm came on.

I was thankful to arrive home—so was Karin. Was this another sly test of the powers of endurance of the "English miss"? I can go for a walk of twenty miles and enjoy it, but not, for choice, along railway-lines and over sleepers!

The boys are a queerly assorted lot. They are clever, all of them, in their several and particular ways.

Max, the eldest, is of the fair Scandinavian type. He worships the ground his mother treads upon, and she returns his devotion. She strikes me as

being rather a hard woman, but there is no hardness where Max is concerned. Her green eyes light up and her voice softens whenever her first-born comes stiffly into the room where she is working.

Professorinnan, like Martha, is "cumbered with much serving," but I should imagine that she is more methodical than her Eastern prototype. The amount she gets through in a day is a marvel. I think she rather despises me because I loathe the very sight of a needle.

Professorinnan is rich, but she would have been much happier as the wife of a poor man. Wealth limits the wide scope of her talents. It sounds a ridiculous thing to say, but it is so.

She is also extremely shy. Dislikes entertaining, and is never so happy as when she is the life and centre of her home. All the boys appreciate the cleverness of their parents. Quite naturally they regard the brains that their parents have handed on to them as part of their birthright. They are all interesting: the question arises, are any of them what one would describe as "lovable"?

Torsten is, perhaps, the cleverest of the lot. He was born with the nature of a wasp, and his thin,

emaciated body and provocative manner tend to heighten the resemblance to that much-disliked insect. His small, rather watery eyes peer out suspiciously at the world through his enormous tortoiseshell glasses. He is alarmingly clever, and his own avowed object at present is to catch me tripping. I know he calls me "that luxury animal" behind my back, and very soon will say it to my face. He insists that all Englishwomen are included under that somewhat vague and yet expressive term of opprobrium. He is an unsuspecting victim of German propaganda, and he hates the English to the extent of spitting when this race is casually mentioned in the course of conversation. Had he the power of the *gettatura* I should die at short notice—and in an unpleasant way.

Sigvard is, without question, the handsomest of the lot. Tall, golden-haired, blue-eyed, imperious, Sigvard will work damage among the fair sex. He has already started. I met him the other day tumbling out of the window of his bed-sitting-room. He hardly paused to click his heels to me in his headlong flight towards the forest that stretches so grimly behind the house.

It was Matthias, courtly and suave, who put me

wise to the reason for Sigvard's sudden disappearance. "Two girls from the school called here today to fetch Sigvard to a party. He ran like a lamp-lighter. As for me, I like girls. I should not run away. Synga, the daughter of the lodge-keeper, is already a little love of mine!"

Lars, aged twelve, is an example of reversion to type. He has many of the characteristics of primitive man. He rules the small fry in the nursery by the mere shouting powers of his Bull of Bashan lungs. I believe, if I were weak enough to bribe him with something to eat before each lesson, he would speak English fluently in a week.

He has already the figure of an epicure; food and sleep are his only passions. He scents things good to eat from afar, and should nuts, grapes, oranges, etc., be placed on a table downstairs when he is up in the nursery bellowing at the full pitch of his vocal cords, a sudden silence dwells among the small gods in Olympus, and a curved shadow comes slinking and slouching down the stairs and into the room, edging up to the richly-laden table deprecatingly.

Valentin, aged nine, is perhaps the least interesting of the boys. At any rate, I find him so.

He hardly ever speaks. He lolls at meals, crouching low in his chair, and his hard head, round and shaven like a Chinaman's, slowly turns from side to side, his eyes, solemn as an owl's, following the ball of conversation as it is carelessly tossed from one player to the next.

He seems to live in a strange half-world of his own and only to poke his head out of his shell at such times as his involved affairs fail to grip.

He is, I fear, not a success at school. There are constant complaints. The little varmint is for ever dreaming in class and neglects his lessons. He objects most strongly when his peaceful meditations are broken in upon by senseless questions concerning history, geography, arithmetic!

Valentin will make a very successful fakir. He will receive all that mortification that is so good for the flesh and so indispensable for that particular career at the hands of his father if he isn't a bit more wakeful.

Olavus Petri, the youngest boy, attracts me vastly. I feel sure that his parents do not value him at his true worth. They think him stupid.

One glance at the shape of his head and his long, beautifully shaped, square-tipped fingers

should dispose of this fallacy at once. Besides, he has been endowed with the most marvelous gift of oratory.

As I sit reading or working in the hall with Professorinnan, I hear a low, emphatic murmur proceeding from the nursery where the children are gathered in solemn parliament round their Lilliputian nursery-table.

"Who is that who is always talking?" I asked the Professorinnan one night soon after I had started on my career as an "English miss."

Professorinnan, emerging slowly from her abstraction, raised her head and listened.

"That is Olavus Petri. Only the stupid talk so much!"

I looked incredulous.

"We Swedes never talk unless we have something to say," Professorinnan added, noting that I did not bow to her verdict.

"Perhaps he *has* something to say," I said suavely. "Have you ever listened to the orations of Olavus Petri?"

My hostess grew a little red. "I have too much to do to waste my time," she said icily.

I smiled and picked up my book. Professorinnan was nettled at my ignoring her snub.

"Why do you smile like that? You English are so supercilious!" she remarked truculently.

"We English are good judges of character," I said firmly. "I do not understand a word that child says, but his tone, his emphasis, his easy flow, convince me that he has something to say worth while. Olavus Petri, one day, will surprise you. He will be a good preacher, a great orator, and what he says will carry weight."

The Professor had joined us from his bedroom. "My wife is right!" he said. "Alas! that I should create a son who is a fool!"

"I bet you half a crown," I said flippantly, "that in twenty years' time, if you remember our conversation to-night, you will say, 'That "English miss" was right! The son I despised has become a clever man!' "

The Professor is not accustomed to being contradicted, nor, for that matter, is his wife! He looked at me and rubbed his nose thoughtfully. Suddenly he shouted: "Olavus Petri, come here!"

The voices in the nursery checked abruptly. There was a long silence. Impatiently the Pro-

fessor shouted again: "Come here, Olavus Petri!"

A small, shrinking figure, nervously wriggling, appeared on the threshold of the door.

The Professor brusquely said something in Swedish that I did not understand. His vehemence terrifies and petrifies poor Olavus Petri. I have noticed it before. Now the poor imp turned scarlet and burst into tears. I cursed myself for a fool for having brought this trouble upon him.

The Professor turned on me triumphantly. "Not only is the boy a fool, but also a cry-baby!" he insisted.

"If you break in violently upon any genius when deep in the practice of his craft, you are liable to confuse him. This child is sensitive and highly strung, and you startled him. His behaviour strengthens my contention. He has the artistic temperament and needs special treatment."

In spite of herself, Professorinnan smiled, a little wry smile.

"No one has ever ventured to contradict my husband!" she said drily. "No Swedish woman would ever attempt it. You English are so independent. So decided in your views. I like a woman who knows her own mind."

"I apologise at once!" I said. "It seems to me that in Sweden women stand on a different level from what they do in England. I should hate to appear rude to you or to your husband. If I may say so, I like you both so much. After all," I added, as I saw Professorinnan relenting, "it was *your* son I was praising. My admiration for a budding genius carried me away!"

That mollified Professorinnan. In the clashing of our points of view she had overlooked the fact that I was taking up the cudgels in warm admiration of her small son. Her glow of maternal pride obscured the fact that in spite of my ready apology I had again flatly contradicted both her and her husband.

The Professor has a sunny nature. He is never angry for long. In his scanty free time he loves to fool, and, like many brilliant men, he fools remarkably well and without the faintest trace of self-consciousness.

He makes me laugh till I ache. The younger children roll on the floor in agony, clasping tightly their little round tums-tums. Professorinnan takes the tip of her nose delicately between her first finger and her thumb, and even over Karin's

shadowed face there gleams the flicker of a ghostly smile.

He is one of those delightful people who have never really grown up. He is much younger than any of his sons, and vaguely they appreciate this fact. He plays with them and joins in their games; and could the grim men of science, to whom his name is a thing of reverence, realise what a baby the great man really is, they would experience the shock of their lives.

On Sunday night we had a *Föreställning*. The Professor, with a queer-shaped top-hat placed rakishly on the side of his head, and draped in a tablecloth and a fur rug, performed conjuring tricks for our edification. He sat at a small table just within the sliding doors that divide the dining-room from the salon.

Two of the boys were stage-managing their father's show. At the end of each trick the Professor bowed and raised his hat, and at the signal the doors slid together noiselessly. We promptly clapped our acknowledgements of his skill. Then the doors glided apart once more, revealing the *Troll*, hat in hand. The next stunt started.

The conjurer brought off trick after trick. We

could none of us lay a finger on the actual manner of his gross deceptions. The boys opened and shut the doors with absolutely impassive faces. But from behind the scenes—from the green-room, so to speak—there percolated the sounds of shrill expostulation and the deep tones of the Professor answering his accusers. And then such shouts of laughter, they set us all off giggling helplessly though we had only an imperfect knowledge as to what the clamour was about.

After the conjuring was over we adjourned upstairs to the hall for the children's hour before supper.

Lisa, in her long, grey wadded silk dressing-gown, looks like a little Tudor princess. She marches into the hall to say good night, and, if she feels really polite, she curtseys to each one of us in turn and kisses our hands with lips that are as soft and perfumed as rose-petals.

She is as pretty a sight as one could hope to see. But the next night (truth compels me to admit it!) the door may clatter back on its hinges with a bang, and with a shrill war-whoop Lisa is among us—just as Nature made her, and the dame has done her work so well that it is an even prettier sight.

We get no post until the evening! About seven it arrives. The bell rings, there is a rush of feet, sometimes a subdued giggle, then the maid comes demurely up the stairs to the hall, where we are all collected. She carries a bundle of newspapers and letters. These she hands over to the Professor or to Professorinnan, seated in their carved, high-backed chairs at the table, and the distribution starts.

The maid departs to fetch the *smörgås* supper, which she carries up on two large trays. The electric kettle is prepared for tea, and the white bread is toasted on the electric toaster. The boys troop into the hall through the various doors leading from their bed-sitting rooms. The elder ones seat themselves agilely on the banister-rails, balancing and gripping with their toes. The smaller ones drag into the hall their miniature armchairs. They all munch their huge slabs of rye biscuits and etceteras, and if they are deputed to make the toast they deliberately burn a slice or two, or drop one on the floor, then it is their perquisite.

After the grown-ups have eaten the first course of our supper, which I, for one, far from heaving seas, thoroughly enjoy, we tuck away our plates

and empty milk or beer glasses on the lower shelf of the small roller-table, and the hot tea is served (goodness alone knows how long it has been standing), and with it we eat long wafer slices of delicious sweet bread, and gingerbreads as thin as worn-out sixpences.

Then supper is over (eight o'clock), and soon after the family circle breaks up. We each bow, "*Tack så myket!*", wish one another good night and retire to our separate rooms. Professor and Professorinnan are left alone to discuss the happenings of the day and to read the just-arrived newspaper. If Providence is good to me, I also receive an English newspaper—five days old, at least!

And Karin! Just occasionally her famished glare at the post as it comes racing up the stairs is banished by the dealing out of a letter.

She steps forward to receive it, her pale face lit up as if by the lighting of some internal lamp. She flushes up to the roots of her glorious hair. And as she takes the direct answer to her prayers, she curtseys as if she stood before some shrine of mercy.

The letter is never read in our presence. She

places it away reverently in her apron pocket. And as she goes about her duties, handing round the supper, a small white hand, directly it is free of its burden, wanders like a homing dove to the pocket that harbours the messenger of perfect joy. Professorinnan does not approve. I can see it in her closely pressed lips, in the hard gleam that flashes suddenly into her eye as she hovers over the letters that she is so busy sorting spread out before her on the table.

"Karin!" she calls in her low, level voice, and hands the letter over with never a glance at its trembling recipient. The Professor, if he is there, glances at his wife, rubs his nose thoughtfully, and then glances half-ironically at Karin.

I gather from his expression that he thinks her a fool, but a pleasant fool. Professorinnan's attitude is that of the judge to the prisoner in the dock!

I have, long since, lost any interest—that palpitates, that is to say—in posts. I hear from my family pretty regularly, but letters from the family do not clutch suddenly at my throat as I have known other letters do.

But *should* such a letter ever come, which is not

in the least likely, I do pray that I may preserve what Mathilda calls my "poker face."

Professorinnan shall never know that I also might cringe for a letter. Or stand before her cold, hard eye like a criminal at the judgment-seat.

BOOK IV

November 29th

The last time the Governor of X——land and his wife dined with us, his wife made a point of impressing on me that my society would be appreciated at the *Residens.*

I have already received hints of this kind from many of Professorinnan's dinner-guests. Apparently the stranger in their midst in Sweden calls first upon the residents. The situation bristles with complications and impossible situations!

Having, however, all I can do to din the English language into the ears of seven unappreciative boys; into the rose-leaf ears of one small, petulant girl; into the deaf ears of the adder-like Karin; and into the keenly receptive ears of the Professor, I ignored these veiled hints.

Coffee and sweet cakes are all very well for those who like them. But this sticky bait fails to conceal the sharp steel hook of opportunity. No Swede, no European, can resist the temptation to wangle a lesson in the English language.

All day long I have to endure the strain of listening to and correcting words badly pronounced, sentences wrongly constructed, until my head swims. I feel no desire to add to my burden, and so these charming little essays in hospitality are passed by unregarded. Professorinnan was standing by when the Governor's wife, perhaps deeming me more stupid than I am, cut through all conventions and asked me directly if I would come to the *Residens* to consume coffee and sweet cakes, and what day would prove convenient to Professorinnan and myself.

Professorinnan answered for me at once. A Governor's wife is a person of importance and not to be denied.

And so to-day I had to start out, drearily enough, to a *Kaffee-klatsch* at the *Residens*.

There was still a ripping, biting wind, and I had had enough of it yesterday. I plodded across the desolate, open fields, very resentful at having to turn out. Professorinnan had advised me that I must stay two hours at least! Help!

The *Residens* stands in a large garden of its own. The lower part is given up to the offices,

etc. I come to the *Residens* every six weeks (when I remember) to have my passport visa-ed. Nothing happens if I forget it for a month or two; the nice young man smiles upon me benignly, demands 10 kr., does some stamping, and then hands the passport back to me, and I depart.

A neat maid led me up a wide staircase to the second floor.

The Governor's daughter showed me the suite of large, airy rooms, lined with books, the bedrooms leading straight out of the reception-rooms. The two elder daughters had travelled. Their rooms were hung with large photographs of the various places they had visited, among which framed views of Oxford predominated.

We drank coffee, piling our saucers up with sweet cakes, and I racked my brains for suitable topics of conversation.

Most Swedes seem to like reading, but the literature of their own country is limited. Besides the masterpieces of that proud peacock, Sven Hedin, there are Strindberg's novels and plays; the perfectly fascinating tales of Selma Lagerlöff; and Frederica Bremer's works. There are two Lapp

songs published by Johannson Scheffer, a learned Professor of Upsala. Longfellow is said to have cribbed from Scheffer the refrain of his poem "My Lost Youth":

And a verse of Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still;
A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.

But, beyond these few exceptions, there is really very little first-class literature, and all Swedish people appreciate English books. Ethel M. Dell is a great favourite, for most Swedes have strong streaks of sentimentality running through their characters. Walpole appears weekly in their magazines, and many Scandinavians boast of a cult for Galsworthy. French criminal literature, detective stories, etc., and Russian literature of a sensational kind, are great favourites. But the kind of book the Swede is keenest on reading is the book dealing with Sweden from the point of view of the outsider. They study and discuss it virulently and minutely, and they are always furious. They long to see themselves as others see them, and when they get a real chance they never seem to like it!

So books proved one safe topic of conversation, especially as the bookcases of all three girls were packed with English novels.

Thursday, December 2nd

Max is ill in bed. I went, at his request, and read *The Scarlet Pimpernel* to him. Max was much thrilled. He blushed and looked so coy when we came to any love-making that I offered to skip the tender episodes. He implored me, even more coyly, to do no such thing.

Wednesday, December 8th

I went for my first sledge ride and loved it, but it was cold.

I felt so low down and at the mercy of the hoofs of any horse that might pass, but the sensation was delightful and I was beautifully warm—that part of me well under the fur rugs.

Friday, December 10th

Sun now sets at 2 P.M.

Monday, December 13th

The boys have the day off for skating. When the ice is strong enough to bear, the school closes for a day, and the boys are free.

I went to the Customs to fetch the fur-lined coat K. is sending out to me; 18 kr. 50 öre duty to pay, and not a new coat at that! I shall be ruined!

A Supper Party

Another party! What a whirl we live in! A supper party at the restaurant in the town. We drive there in an open sledge. The temperature anything below zero.

We arrive at seven, and enter, importantly, our private suite. The first room boasts a table laden with various bottles and bowls of fruit. When the guests have all arrived, we ladies retire to the farther room until we are graciously summoned back to drink *glögg*. It is doled out of a bowl with a ladle, and it is very sticky; it is also intoxicating. Almonds and raisins nestle cosily at the bottom of the glass in the lees of the wine, and after a free indulgence in them the results are disastrous.

Glögg is the Swedish Christmas drink. It is brought round to the bedrooms early in the morning of December 13th. Everyone must sit up in bed and drink *"Skål"* to the health of the host and hostess. Then one can snuggle down and sleep

off the potation. The *glögg*-bearer generally ends up the round a little unsteady on his or her feet. *Glögg* is sweet and an insidious drink, and small boys and maids are easily tempted as they bear the bowl from room to room.

I must relate here the Swedish legend concerning *glögg*.

"It was the Monday before Christmas, and, according to inexorable custom, *glögg* had to be drunk in company at supper.

"Greta had no idea that danger might lurk in the raisins and almonds in her glass of hot wine. She took a fork and raked them each out in turn; she munched them contentedly.

"Then there came the drive home. Wrapped up in furs to face the northern blast, she stepped into the sleigh. The cold air after the overheated room did its fell deed. . . . The next to pass along that icy road saw a young girl sitting patiently on the steep bank of ice and snow that bordered the highway. He drew up his sleigh. Such a proceeding in northern Sweden amounts to suicide.

"'*Fröken*, will you not take a seat in my sledge?'

"The damsel by the roadside regarded the rescuer in haughty surprise.

" 'Oh, no, thank you. Can you not see that I am driving home with my brother-in-law?' "

. . . . . .

We gather in course of time gaily round the supper-table. Brown and white bread is handed round, and we are regaled on sardines, *foie-gras*, and red slices of smoked salmon, a great delicacy. We feast on omelettes and sip champagne. Turkey follows, garnished with cranberries, chestnuts, and stuffed aubergines. A creamy sweet crowns the repast, with Madeira, then we return to our bower.

One lady walks across a sofa and up on to her husband's back. He carries her pick-a-back round the room. A shapely leg is displayed clad in an immaculate black silk stocking.

Our host slips insinuating arms round the necks of two ladies; he draws them gently down upon his manly bosom and presents them each, impartially, with a *glöggy* kiss. They all look at me enquiringly.

"Are all Englishwomen as cold as you are?" our host enquires.

I shrug my shoulders nonchalantly.

"Because your particular type does not appeal strongly to me, you must not jump to the conclusion that I am cold—or the majority of my countrywomen," I reply suavely.

"Well done! Snub his conceit! He asked for it!" Professorinnan applauds.

Christmas

Christmas Eve—the great day in Sweden. Breakfast at nine-thirty. The children have coffee and gingerbreads up in the glory-hole at eight. I prefer bed.

We took a sledge and dashed round town, doing last-minute Christmas shopping. I fetched a parcel from the post.

Dinner at three. Ham, excellent. Apple tart, ambrosial.

We then went off to the hospital. A smug young

minister, too conscious of the flutter he was creating in the hearts of the nurses, held a little service, hymns and a sermon, followed by coffee and cakes. I was the greatest stranger in the place, and had to take the lead, making the round of the huge hall, greeting the doctors and nurses; the former clicked and bowed, the latter curtseyed. Then I had still to keep the bit between my teeth, to walk across the slippery parquet floor, pour myself out a cup of coffee, pile cakes in a heap on my saucer, curtsey to the stern Sister Anne, the giver of the feast, and retire to my seat in the wide circle surrounding the hall—the "English miss," the cynosure of all those hard, critical Swedish eyes.

Coffee over, the Christmas-tree of the patients was carried in. They try to stay in the hospital over Christmas, because they have such a good time there.

The doctor is very popular among all classes of society. A grateful patient, the proprietor of the best hotel in the town, had mulcted his clients of 2,000 kr. to pay for the treat at the hospital. He drew up a subscription list, and, after his guests had dined, wisely, and in many cases too well, he succeeded in persuading them to subscribe to it

lavishly, handing the proceeds over to the doctor.

The telephone rang, ordering us home to our own feast.

We collected in the nursery, a large, cheerful room in which stood an enormous tree beautifully decorated by the children with hundreds of sweets —*caramels*, as they call them—twisted up in brightly coloured paper, suspended from the branches.

Two huge washing-basins were brought in, filled with presents. Then the fun began. Max was ill, lying on a sofa. He must have been nearly deafened, and he looked as if his head were swimming badly.

Professorinnan gave me, amongst other things, a little blue enamel pot, a Norwegian import. I had admired one of hers very much.

After the noise had subsided a bit, and we had emerged in safety from all the paper wrappings and string, without being popped by mistake into a waste-paper basket, our host received us out in the hall, and we drank "*Skål*" to one another in Madeira and ate fruit and nuts.

The great trial of the day (for me), we de-

scended for our Christmas dinner. A kind of wobbly jelly fish, tainted with an indescribable smell, served with cayenne and buttered beans, the national Swedish dish (like nothing on earth). It was followed by a rice meringue served with sugar and grated nutmeg. Quite nice! We drank a curious Swedish drink, only served at this festive season, I believe, and just as well, perhaps! It was concocted from stout, champagne, Madeira, and sugar. Excellent, but weird, and *rather* intoxicating.

We retraced our unsteady steps to the nursery and "swayed" round the Christmas-tree, carolling gaily. We went on eating nuts and fruit the whole evening until the *smörgås bord* was brought in at eight, and, after a sketchy supper, we all retired to bed.

Christmas in the cruel, glittering, icy North, where the sun's rays are almost level with one's eyes, where the skies are a tender wedgwood blue, and where, during certain hours of the too-short daylight, the snow on the heavily-laden branches turns a faint rose-pink.

We rise at five on Christmas Day and drive in

the frozen darkness, in open sledges, to church, after having fortified ourselves with coffee and gingerbread animals up in the hall. An hour's drive in pitch-black, were it not for the occasional houses we pass here and there, with every blind up, each window blazing with lighted candles or a gaily decorated Christmas-tree.

The church is aglow with soft candlelight, hundreds of candles lining the bare walls; and the congregation assembled in all kinds of weird and unbelievable furs, suggests a curious human Zoo.

The candles and the furs combined give forth a curious reek; the sermon is the last yawn in dullness, but the drive home is worth all temporary discomfort.

Christmas this year was like a dream. A long procession of sledges crunching over the frozen snow, the bells playing a tinkling *obbligato*, while to the east, just above the dark blue hills, the sun was rising in a crash of purple, pale eau-de-nil, turquoise, and gold.

The dressmaker to dinner. We are "democrat" here. Afterwards we played childish games in the hall, ate apples and nuts, etc.

We had a fire at dinner. We dined by candlelight in honour of Christmas, and all the candelabra were decorated with pink and white tissue paper. Round the table stood candles in small red wooden stands to match the tulips and the "pink marmalade"—a kind of Turkish delight—in the handsome glass dishes.

Torsten, possessed by a fidget-devil, moved one of the smaller candles under the candelabra.

"There will be a fire!" he said.

Sure enough there was!

In a moment the paper wrapped firmly round the candelabra was in a fierce blaze. There was a second's pause of suspense; everyone in Sweden dreads fire, as nearly all the houses—here in the north, at any rate—are of wood.

Then Professorinnan leant forward and grabbed the blazing pyre; the Professor fled to the nearest windows. The first pair opened easily, but they were double; the second jammed.

There was an agonised pause. Professorinnan stood calm and rigid, her eyes glued to the flaming torch that was scorching her hand badly.

At last the window gave under the strenuous assaults of the Professor. Professorinnan glided

up behind him and hurled the candelabra on to the snow in the pitch-black outside. An icy blast swirled through the room, making every candle-flame dance and flicker.

Torsten had sat as one hypnotised during these proceedings. When his father and mother quietly took their places at table once more, he found his tongue.

"I did it!" he said shrilly.

After dinner the Professor took his sons into his room and talked to them seriously on the perils of playing with fire. Central heating and electric light do not accustom thoughtless boys to the danger of the open flame.

As the dressmaker was departing, Professorinnan called me downstairs to see the effect of the moonlight on the snow. The trees stood out boldly against the magic, pink moonlight, each dressed in its fairy dress of snow. A vision of rare beauty.

I was not allowed to stand and to admire for long; the cold is liable to strike treacherously, especially after central heating.

December 26th

All feeling rather slack and cross after too much Christmas good cheer. They brought me coffee in bed this morning—as usual on Sunday.

An enormous silver coffee-pot, a solid silver sugar-box filled with grey oblongs of beet sugar; a solid silver cream-jug filled with thick yellow cream. Eight wafer-thin ginger-breads, four slices of saffron bread thick with raisins, and one sugar-bread. I did not do so badly!

Déjeuner at ten-thirty. Lisa prowled into my room, and we solemnly danced the polka together. When we were tired, Lisa, in her red embroidered Norwegian frock, turned head-over-heels across the room to show the red sateen knickers her mother had "sewn" her to wear beneath it. She then seated herself on a chair and composed a long Swedish *saga*, which she acted vigorously as she went along. Suddenly getting bored—a little way she has—she walked in silence to the door, opened it, bobbed once suddenly, and departed. The next moment she was storming up the stairs shouting vociferously for Olavus Petri—her devoted and abject slave and pal.

Professorinnan cross-examined Torsten at *déjeuner*. With whom had he been conversing in his room last night after she had said good night and turned out the light? Torsten denied that he had conversed.

"You cannot have said all that in your sleep," she said severely.

Torsten remained indifferent to her sarcasm.

"You were learning Latin?" I suggested. Torsten shook his head. Torsten always learns Latin aloud—as I know to my cost!

Professorinnan turned suavely to me. "You were not admiring the moonlight with Torsten?"

"No! I was admiring it alone," I said coldly. Her question smacked of insolence after my suggestion concerning Latin.

"I did not think you would go to Torsten's room after you had seen me switch off the light! But I thought you must be there!"

I raised my eyebrows nonchalantly, but vouchsafed no further reply. Professorinnan looked at me under her downcast lashes suspiciously.

Bengt had his mouth full of sausage, potato, rye biscuit, and butter. Now, however, he was at liberty to speak.

"I was there," he said, in his gracious, ceremonial manner, "talking to Torsten."

"Oh, then!" expostulated Torsten. "It was early—only ten o'clock. You said last *night*. You must be more exact."

Torsten is, I believe, fifteen, as years go. But in priggishness he is as old as Methuselah.

December 27th

I have been presented with a lovely book on Lapland. I suggested tentatively to Torsten that he should translate it to me in the course of his lessons. His face fell. He swore it was too technical and would take a lifetime. It is a very big book, so we compromised on Sven Hedin.

Torsten is keen on biology. He has books about every part of the world, about the natives that inhabit them, the plants that beautify them, and the wild beasts that still remain to terrorise the inhabitants.

Book after book we have turned over together, comparing races and languages, etc. There is

nothing he is not interested in, except politics; he tersely describes them as "dirt"; and he seems to cherish a rooted antipathy to parsons—more especially missionaries.

He wants to investigate every spot in the world, Russia excepted. It is an eye-opener to me how the Swedes hate and fear their natural foe. Russia wants an ice-free port; she also has an eye on their iron-mines; and it would be so easy just to slip across—not so easy now, perhaps, that Finland has self-determination!

The fair of Nijni-Novgorod possesses, however, a lurking fascination for Torsten. He told me a yarn about two travellers *en route* for the great market there, one an Englishman; the other a German Jew.

"I will bet you two hundred roubles," said the former, "that I can guess your thoughts!"

"Done!" cried the other. "The roubles are yours if you guess correctly."

"Well," said the Englishman, "you are going to Nijni-Novgorod. You will lay out ten thousand roubles in goods to take back to Germany, and you will then declare yourself bankrupt and offer your creditors ten shillings in the pound."

The Jew unbuttoned his fur-lined coat, produced a pocket-book, and silently counted out the money.

"What!" cried the Englishman, "I guessed right?"

"You did not!" replied the Jew. "But the beautiful idea you have sold me is worth double the money!"

. . . . . .

Torsten told me the story at dinner of the Russian who said he loved all women—but he drew the line rigidly at the "Home, Sweet Home Englishwoman."

December 28th

Lisa, aged four, came to my room this morning. She sees her brothers having lessons; she does not see why she should be left out. So she seats herself at my writing-table and reads out fairy-tales to herself with great emphasis.

The important way she licks her fingers before she turns over a leaf! It holds me spellbound.

I always used to think it a horrid habit, but everything Lisa does is right. Her father, her mother, her seven brothers, all bow down before her—convulsed with laughter often, but obedient.

She holds all our hearts in the hollows of her dimpled hands, even when she loudly demands beer—banging her spoon on her tin tray until it is rushed up—and drinks it with gusto.

A second fire to-night; now there must be a third.

We were sitting in the salon after dinner. Another of those most dangerous paper-decorated candelabra stood on the piano, which was covered with a white linen drawn-thread cloth. The candles were burning low, and Professorinnan told Bengt to extinguish them.

He dragged himself across the room in his usual slack way and slid a negligent hand down over the first flame, promptly setting the paper below alight.

Once more Professorinnan fled like a startled hare across the room. Once more the Professor struggled with the windows. Once more a blazing candelabra was hurled out on to the virgin snow.

All the time I had been conscious of a low squeaking noise. Poor little Olavus Petri, with his queer, tilted-up nose and worried eyebrows, had fled for cover behind the curtain, hiding his eyes from the angry blaze and squeaking like a little porker separated from his dam.

December 29th

We went shopping in the sledge, fifteen degrees of cold, Celsius. Olavus Petri on the box-seat, patiently awaiting his mother lingering in the well-warmed shops, suddenly burst into helpless tears. The temperature in the open sledge, even under warm fur rugs, was an eye-opener and a frozen-tear producer; what it must have been on the unprotected front seat I shudder to contemplate. He scrambled down stiffly from his seat and measured his length on the snow, almost rigid with cold. I ran him up and down the snowy track to try to restore his circulation. When Professorinnan finally emerged from her cosy retreat I remonstrated as strongly as I could.

At the bank, our next house of call, we were graciously invited within. Olavus Petri, when I lifted him down from his perch, collapsed again, but so great was his fear of being scolded for crying that he preferred biting cold without to warmth within.

Argument was useless; we formed, the two of us, a little Tower of Babel. So I swooped down on Olavus Petri and caught him round the waist, and upside down, wildly kicking, I bore him up the steps and into the arms of the bank director. Our reception was almost as chilly as the temperature outside, but I wasted no words on needless apology. I ripped off both pairs of Olavus Petri's woollen gloves and started to rub one small pinched hand vigorously, while Lisa, with her most important air, pursing up her lips beneath her close-fitting white ermine bonnet, rubbed the other. The storm of sobs quieted down and died away.

December 30th

Twenty-five Celsius. The sky is wedgwood blue. The ground is covered with dazzling white

snow, and the trees, with their branches outlined in fleecy white, are slowly turning a soft rose-pink under the almost level rays of the sun. It is eight-forty A.M. The moon is still shining in rivalry with the sun. It adds to the beautiful uncanny effect. I can understand why Northern races believe in fairies and pixies and gnomes and *trolls*. I might be looking out on fairyland itself from my window.

. . . . . .

The Professor said to-day: "After plodding through *Little Lord Fauntleroy* I must have a *horrid* book or I shall always have a too sweet taste in my mouth when I think of England. 'Dearest, love curls' "—he waved both hands in the air, as if beating off a mosquito—"it is—what you say?—feeding up!"

. . . . . .

Laplanders have come down to a small town about two Swedish miles from here with their reindeer (fifteen English miles). It is snowing hard now. The Professor says if the weather clears up he will take us to see them.

"They are not the genuine article," he explained. "They are the showman Lapps who make a paying business out of themselves and their reindeer. When they see sightseers arriving, they drive their animals into the forest and then say they cannot take you to see them unless you give them *pengar* (money)."

Before the war a reindeer was worth, say, ten shillings a head. The price rose to one pound as the Lapps began to understand the value of money and the amount they could demand for their hand-made wares manufactured from bone and skin. They stopped buying in kind and demanded hard cash instead. During the war the deer went up in price to six and eight pounds a head. Now the price has sunk again. Many Lapps possess a thousand head of deer. They live in their villages during the summer, but when winter comes and brings the snow, the reindeer, having eaten all the available moss in one place, move on to another, and the owner of the herd has to strike his camp and follow on whither his herd leads. Relations between Norway and Sweden are much strained in consequence. When a herd sweeps into Norway, devouring everything edible as it goes, the Nor-

wegian peasant, most naturally, objects to seeing his means of livelihood gobbled up before his eyes.

. . . . . .

Lisa amused me so much at dinner to-night. We were served with glass bowls filled with a mixture of strawberries and rhubarb. We poured cream into our bowls, and the contents tasted like freshly gathered strawberries and cream.

Lisa enjoyed her share immensely, chasing the large fat strawberries round and round her plate with the business end of her pusher and her spoon; the fruit being safely harvested, she leant back in her chair like a satiated alderman at a city banquet, slid her plump arms down by her side, and breathed out fervently: "*Också!*"

. . . . . .

It is decided that, fever or no fever, Max is to go to a health resort in South Sweden with his mother on Sunday. It seems to me sheer madness. The slightest effort upsets him, yet he is allowed to play in chess tournaments, and his bedroom is the gathering-place for the whole whooping clan, also a few sisters from the hospital, a doctor or two,

and numerous school-friends. There are more ways of murdering a person than buying weed-killer, and the pathetic thing is, I do not believe anyone actually wants to kill him.

December 31st

I went to the Customs to fetch a plum pudding sent to me from England. As I reached the Customs-house it flashed upon me that I had left an important paper behind. No amount of wheedling, no bluff, could procure me that blessed, anxiously awaited pudding. The officials swore that no such parcel had been received by them from the post, but in the book lying open on the table awaiting my signature for goods already delivered there was an entry in my name still unaccounted for. I put my finger firmly down upon the entry, and produced with an air two of the three papers necessary. In vain.

When Professorinnan drove up in her sledge to fetch me, the first thing she said was: "Well, have you got that pudding?"

I had to confess I had played the fool and omitted to bring with me all the sacrifices necessary for the due propitiation of the little tin god of red tape.

Back we drove through the town and out into the country, Jehu-like. Before the sledge had stopped at the door I had leaped out sideways, the deep snow saving me from a broken neck. Into the house I dashed, terrifying the little maid, unaccustomed still to my headlong ways. I grabbed up that precious piece of yellow paper and ran back to the sledge. The driver's whip cracked in the frozen air like a pistol-shot—we were off.

Curses rang out sharply. People sprang to one side, plunging waist-deep in snow as we tore past them. The church clock in the tower said ten minutes to two. The Customs close at two. Down the icy hill we slithered, and drew up with a teeth-rattling jerk at the forbidding entrance. I fled up the dark, winding stone staircase and met the janitor, keys in hand, on the threshold. I pushed past him, waving my paper triumphantly over my head.

Was not to-morrow New Year's Day? A holiday—and the Customs closed? Were not the

Professor and the Professorinnan yearning to taste that pudding and she going south with Max on Sunday afternoon?

I got that precious parcel after hours. The Swedish official is always and above all a gentleman—especially when the English, the mad English, are concerned!

. . . . . .

Among the books Margaret sent me out for the children was a nursery-rhyme book. As I stood behind the screen in my bed-sitting-room, the door opened, and Lisa trotted in, sucking her thumb. She gazed round the room murmuring to herself.

Then she put on her important walk and strutted to the writing-table, scrambled up on a chair, and, producing some crumpled paper from her apron-pocket, proceeded to make up a surprise-packet for the English Aunt by wrapping the paper neatly round her rag-book, whispering to herself all the time.

I advanced softly over the carpet, and laid the nursery-rhyme book in Lisa's busy hands. She raised her head and regarded me with wondering

eyes. Parcels for Aunt from Lisa—that she understood; but parcels for Lisa from Aunt—that was quite another matter. She shook her golden head. The English Aunt was impeding the serious business of the day.

When she did understand, her beautiful courtesy forsook her. She made one wild dash for the door.

"Sigvard!" I heard her shriek, laughing her clear, bubbling laugh. "The English Aunt has given me such a merry book!"

No one could part her from her book. It was one of my few successes in life. At dinner she sat upon it. In bed she demanded it. Her father thanked me with tears in his eyes—for is not Lisa the apple of his eye?

Olavus Petri also received a book, but Olavus Petri is but as the shadow that steals after the substance. No one notices his joy when Lisa is jubilant. . . .

Her father was just as infatuated with the book. He stole it—what time Lisa slept.

He sat and read the verses aloud and demanded exact translations of: "tripe, Jenny Wren, fie upon you, bold-faced gig!" etc.

"This is the way to learn English!" he ex-

claimed. "Here I see 'bough' rhymes with 'cow,' and 'rough' with 'muff.' Heavens, what a language!"

After I was in bed, I heard dreamily in the distance, away up in the hall, a voice rising and falling in the subtle cadence of "This is the house that Jack built. . . ."

Then a pause, and another voice took up the refrain, his wife translating, and then a rising cyclone as each son, in turn, pattered out of his bedroom and came to help set father in the way he should go.

The success of Mr. Berlitz grows pale and wan in comparison with that of my nursery-rhyme book—as a method of teaching English.

New Year's Day

Coffee was brought to my room this morning. First breakfast at ten.

Professorinnan broke it to me gently that I must go with her and her husband to the Governor's

to-day to return thanks for hospitality received.

We drove thither in a sledge. A crowd of people in the drive coming and going. The whole population of the town seemed to be at the *Residens.*

We walked up the staircase to the private apartments and slipped out of our fur wraps, then, unannounced, we strolled along the corridor to greet our host and hostess. We made the circle of the room, bowing and curtseying to friends and acquaintances, then back to the Governor and his wife, more bows and curtseys; we slipped back into our wraps, got into the sledge and drove home. What a farce!

I went to say good-bye to Max, so as not to tire him to-morrow unnecessarily, and to take him the *Graphic*, which he loves. I told him we must carry on a correspondence in English: he bowed in his courteous way and assented, though in his heart of hearts I know he deems me a bore for the mere suggestion.

To-night we had the Christmas pudding. The Professor came to seek me in Max's room. He wanted to know was it not the English custom to

pour *schnapps* over the pudding and then to set it alight?

And what about a sauce?

The Professor is a real tonic, always interested in everything, ever keen.

Dinner came. The Professor was jumping on his chair with excitement. The Swedes secretly admire English ways and customs and publicly decry them. It had been one of the unfulfilled ambitions of his life to taste a Christmas pudding. He poured a full tumbler from his litre of brandy over the pudding and lit it. The old familiar blue flame, which I had not seen since the war, danced into life and flickering motion. Blue devils seemed to chase one another over the pudding—for the time being my own personal blue devil joined in the chase and left me.

Torsten took one doubtful mouthful and looked as if he were crossing the Channel; a second, and then a third; when the pudding was brought round again, he piled up his plate, in silent but eloquent testimony of his appreciation of at least one old British custom.

Professorinnan took three helpings, then, in her most charming manner—and Professorinnan can

be very charming—drank to the health of the sender of the pudding and begged for the receipt.

She wished to introduce our national dish at one of her most swagger dinner-parties.

Everyone in Sweden knows about Christmas pudding; those who have tasted it—and you have no idea how proud they are of that fact—are few and far between.

January 2nd

Lisa came to my room before breakfast to bid farewell to me before she sets off for Stockholm. She was arrayed in her new blue woollen frock that her mother had knitted her from one of the tempting patterns in my English papers.

. . . . . .

They have just gone—Professorinnan, Max, Sister Astrid, and Lisa, with the Professor in attendance to see them off. Max in an open motor, with the snow falling and a cold wind. It seems to me madness! They have engaged a through

carriage by the one-thirty train, with a sleeping-car; they arrive at Stockholm at about eleven to-morrow, and Lisa goes on to stay with her grand-parents on their estate in the south.

Just before the car started, a sledge drove past on its way to the hospital. A man was crouching down on it, helping to balance an enormous coffin, laid along the side, covered with a black velvet pall, flecked with snowflakes. Thank goodness Professorinnan did not see it—and I think I do not believe in omens.

. . . . . .

It was worse for Max than I imagined. Professorinnan went especially to the station last week to arrange for a carriage to be reserved for her and her party. The station-master was all bows and smiles; anything and everything, of course, for Professorinnan. She arrived at the station to-day; every seat taken, no reserved carriage to be had at all. The Professor had to beg the occupants not to smoke on account of Max's lungs. They promised, of course, but so had the station-master! Professorinnan and Sister Astrid had to stand in the corridor until they got to Långsele,

many hours in their long journey towards the south.

Poor little Lisa, how tired she will be! The Professor says once they get to Långsele, sleeping-cars are booked, and they are safe. I suppose he knows all right. "Put not your trust——!"

The Professor made strict regulations at dinner to-night. Only English was to be spoken. In his frantic efforts to speak it himself, he was quite oblivious of the boys' clandestine conversation carried on in whispered Swedish under his nose.

I think the Professor is terrified lest things may prove uncomfortable during the absence of his wife and lest I shake the northern snow off my snow-boots and depart.

Professorinnan had great difficulty in finding anyone bold enough to contemplate a long journey and a still longer sojourn in the icy northland of pro-German Sweden—though in all probability the latter fact, and the utter desolation and dreariness of this God-forsaken little northern commercial town, were mercifully hidden from the few wary fish who did nibble at the bait.

So the Professor commissioned Torsten and Sigvard to go to the town to purchase skis for

Karin and me, also snow-boots and thick stockings.

He says the woods round us are as a *saga* in the moonshine and that it is impossible to go into them without skis as one would sink deeply at every step. I expect I shall want two pairs—one for my hands and one for my feet—though I must say it *looks* delightfully easy.

I told Torsten I was sure my stockings were thick enough. He said he must see them. He came into my room and stood over me while I opened my wardrobe and hunted through those terrible open shelves for the particular pair I thought might suit the occasion.

I handed the stockings over. Torsten felt them judicially; proclaimed them, with a sniff, "Na-poo!" They would not keep out the wet. I protested. Torsten sniffed again. "I must show them to the family," he announced, in his most paternal tones, and departed.

He returned after a solemn conclave—I believe "the family" really meant the Professor. "No, they are no good. Luxury things. I must get you some more; and now, boots; how big are your boots?"

"Would it not be more tactful," I suggested, "to ask me how small they are?"

Torsten grinned his Machiavellian grin.

"Good gr-r-racious!" he said. "I have been most unpolite!"

"My size is small fours," I said, producing a shoe.

"I do not know four," Torsten said, scratching his head and sniffing. "I think they must be thirty-five."

It was my turn to ejaculate, "Good gr-r-racious!"

Torsten took away my shoes.

"I shall look how long they are," he said reassuringly.

"I suppose you mean you will measure them," I submitted. "Why are my flowers of English so wasted on you?"

January 4th

I had my first lesson on snow-shoes to-day. The Professor announced at lunch that snow-shoe run-

ning was *auffrischend.* (Have I confessed that our chief medium of conversation is German? I do not know how any of the lessons would progress without it.)

After lunch Torsten tapped on my door and appeared with two big brown cardboard boxes and a pair of coarse grey socks.

"*Jetzt geht's los!*" he remarked. "Father says you are to come out at once. Unfortunately, I cannot accompany you as I have taken my snow-shoes to be greased, but Bengt will teach you. You must take the bigger pair; the smaller are for Karin."

He stood over me and superintended my toilet and then escorted me to the door. In the looking-glass above his head I studied his fiendish grin of glee that Bengt had to bear the burden of instructing two "luxury animals"—one a hated *engelsk Fröken.*

Bengt strapped me on to my snow-shoes, and off we started. I did not find it so difficult to walk, but I could not proceed at the rate Bengt seemed to expect, and I repeatedly wandered off his trail into the deeper snow at the side. When finally he decided I had been out long enough (about fifteen

minutes; Bengt had a skating engagement elsewhere that afternoon!), I asked him how I was to turn. He promptly flung one leg up, snow-shoe and all, into the air, and then sat down squarely and abruptly on the snow. Scarlet with wounded pride, he murmured soft words under his breath; but I did not add to my Swedish vocabulary just then, favourable as the moment might appear. I was vainly endeavouring to do as Bengt had done, but my leg and its attendant snow-shoe utterly declined to aspire to such a height.

"You should wear knickerbockers and a tricot top. All the ladies do," Bengt said severely, looking at my tweed skirt, of which he obviously disapproved.

Lars had a dinner-party to-night; six little boys, schoolmates. They all surrounded me in a batch directly I appeared, clicked their heels, held out their hands, and dropped their heads forward on their breasts, just as if they were about to be guillotined, exposing a fair mark of bare neck to the glittering knife. The Professor ranged them round the table according to height. They sat below the salt, we sat above it. And every time I

spoke the eldest clodhopper went off into fits of laughter.

Little Lord Fauntleroy again to-night! The Professor wanted an accurate translation into Swedish—or German—of "fairly launched on his subject."

A telephone message from Stockholm. Max has developed dry pleurisy. He is to go into a private hospital at once. The visit to the Swedish health-resort has been knocked on the head. When Max leaves the hospital, he goes to a pension in the country, run by the physician.

I wonder when my hostess will return?

Sigvard was ill yesterday. His father cannot sleep alone. He must have someone with him to amuse him. So Sigvard, the handsome and nonchalant, was ordered to be Gentleman of the Bedchamber and to bring his chess-board with him—in case his father could not sleep and wanted a game in the middle of the night.

Sigvard, too proud to remonstrate, simply lifted his eyebrows at his chortling brethren when sentence was pronounced at the dinner-table. But he

got his revenge. A violent bilious attack seized him in its remorseless grip at the witching hour of chess. To-day he has been starving. His father, who is crazed on the subject of people eating too much, told me at dinner-time that the only cure for a bilious attack was abstinence from food—except, perhaps, the very plainest. At supper to-night, up in the hall, I saw him butter thickly three sweet biscuits, place a piece of *foie-gras* on each, and then top them with cheese. This simple invalid diet he carried with his own kind hands to Sigvard, still writhing in the throes of a badly disturbed inside.

January 5th

This morning, as I heard the front door bang, I drew up my blind. The Professor, bare-headed, was hopping, skipping, and jumping down the drive. As he broke his thigh-bone last year, I was rather surprised at his "gazellishness," but when I flung the window wide I understood his antics. The sill was piled high with dry, flaky snow; there

had been a heavy fall during the night, and the Professor was making his way in the dim twilight through a virgin snowfield. I shall have fun on my shoes to-day.

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We are still celebrating Christmas! We were served with the wobbly fish again to-night and the rice meringue. Torsten and Lars got the lucky beans this time. I could see that Sigvard and Karin were sharing some secret jest. Sigvard suddenly turned to Torsten and muttered something low in his ear, mentioning my name.

Torsten broke out into violent protestations. Sigvard had suggested me as a future wife for Torsten; the latter was declining the offer vigorously—and hardly with thanks.

I caught the Professor's twinkling eye, and we both shouted with laughter. In a moment the long table was in an uproar. Torsten scarlet, shaken out of his carefully assumed cynical calm, condescended to explanations—which only tended to make matters worse or more comic.

"I told you I would never marry an English-

woman—but there is one worse—a German! *Usch!*"

I think he meant to be polite. The Professor waggled his hands and shook his head and blew his nose helplessly while the tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Torsten!" I gasped hysterically, "this is indeed a bitter blow!"

"Bitter blow!" re-echoed the Professor. "What is, then, that? Sigvard, fetch the dictionary."

From a side-pocket he whipped out the blue book in which he notes down each word and expression I use.

The Professor is nothing if not thorough!

Christmas lasts till to-morrow. To-morrow they celebrate the visit of the Three Kings. The feast inspired Torsten to a criticism of the English God!

"*Usch!* Your God is not as our Swedish God! He does not understand Swedish—only English, a little Latin and Greek, perhaps also Hebrew."

"He was responsible for the Tower of Babel, my young friend," I suggested, "and some Being must have thought out your weird Swedish language before *you* were to put the world right!"

Torsten shrugged his meagre shoulders. "A fable!" sniffed he.

Torsten is an athiest—by conviction, not by law. In Sweden no one is allowed to be an atheist. He must belong to some religion. Before he changes his place of residence he must go to the clergyman in whose district he resides to tell him under which heading his religious convictions are to be scheduled: Buddhist, Baptist, Salvation Army, Mahommedan, Presbyterian, even Mormon—any of these he may choose, but atheism, no! There Sweden puts her foot down and there can be no change of residence until a decision has been arrived at and recorded.

Torsten went off this afternoon to have an operation on his foot.

His delusion while under the influence of his whiff of chloroform and ether was typical. He thought he was in bed and talking and that his father said: "Be quiet."

"I have as much right to talk as anyone else. We are all equal; therefore I talk the more."

"Talk!" cried the Professor. "You prayed, you atheist! You cried out, 'Good Lord, have mercy on me!'"

I have just been told that to-morrow is a feast-day. No English lessons. Hooray—and again hooray! Breakfast brought to me in bed. Such a relief after coffee at seven-thirty.

Torsten shirked his lesson to-night. I thought he was ill in bed. He started and assumed an astonished attitude when I asked him why he had not turned up. He did not actually say he had forgotten—merely permitting me to assume that the anæsthetic had softened, *pro tem.*, his super brain!

January 6th

To-day, at second breakfast, orders were issued —Torsten, Bengt, Lars, and Sigvard were to escort Karin and me for a run on skis. The boys made faces behind their father's back. Torsten excused himself brazenly, pleading that he was an invalid.

A nurse came to dinner to-night. Her English was excruciating—and persistent. Directly coffee had been served I excused myself and retired to my room. I find the strain of listening to broken

and bad English very trying at times—the constant effort to understand, to correct politely.

At seven-twenty the Professor tapped at my door—it opens into the salon.

"Ah, please will you come to the ball with me? I must attend it and bring Bengt home. It is at the restaurant. He is already there. His mother is not here. I must chaperon, and I will not go alone."

I glanced at Karin. She still wore her pale georgette blouse. Karin should be a nun; is already one by vocation, though she does not recognise the fact. She has a pale, sad face, chestnut hair, and the faintest, sweetest smile. I have never heard her laugh. She hates the world and the vanities thereof, and patiently does all the cooking for eighteen hungry people. She is the Professor's niece, and when his wife is away from home the social duties should fall on Karin. Alas! They generally slide on to my bored shoulders instead. "The English *Fröken* knows the world. Hers the burden!"

I looked once more imploringly at Karin. I did not want to go. I nearly pleaded fatigue. But the Professor had been so good to me that I always

feel I must do what lies in my power to please him.

"Certainly," I smiled, damning in my heart. "At what hour shall I be ready?"

"Seven-thirty."

And I had lost six precious seconds out of ten minutes mutely appealing to Karin's better nature!

"Good heavens!" I cried. "What shall I wear? A simple frock? High or low?"

"High—most certainly!"

One cannot keep one's host waiting; the more so when he has quicksilver in his veins. I dashed back into my room, dragged out of my wardrobe the first frock that came to hand; drew on a suitable pair of silk stockings over those I was wearing; dabbed at my hair with a brush; tugged on a fur cap and coat; and within nine minutes and fifty-four seconds I was ready. Surely a record!

The sledge was waiting. I looked round for Karin.

"My niece is not well. You will come with me alone. Fru Sangstrom will be at the ball."

My eyes must have twinkled. The Professor's twinkled back.

"Are all English ladies as independent, sensible,

and indifferent to gossip? They do gossip—when my wife is away. It is but fair you should know."

"Their scandal-mongering leaves me cold!" I said with a shrug. "You don't care. I don't care. Your wife doesn't care."

With this sacrifice to the proprieties we stepped into the sledge, fur rugs were flung over us, and away we glided.

The ball opened as a dance for children, round dances, and everyone sang loudly as they whirled round hand in hand, beating out the rhythm with their feet—bang-bang. The hall was decorated with long paper streamers, hanging from ropes near the ceiling. If there were some girl in the room any swain particularly fancied, he stood on tiptoe and hung on to a strip until it parted from its string. He then carefully rolled it up and tossed it towards her, retaining the business end in a hot, sticky hand. None of the chosen were of my choice, but, then, taste in women has not been internationalised. Bengt lolled languidly on a bench and surveyed the crowd with his air of easy philosophy; every now and then he slipped off his bench, lounged round the room, hands buried

deeply in the pockets of his immaculate evening suit, clicked unexpectedly but perfectly before some damsel, and led her forth into the fray. I noticed in the round dances that Bengt was a great favourite; all the plums and cheap treats came his way. He accepted them with unruffled calm and perfect courtesy; feminine homage was no treat to him. True, he had a "little love," the lodge-keeper's daughter, up his sleeve; in northern Sweden we are "democrat"!

In the middle of the dance the Three Wise Men appeared. They were masked and wore high golden hats on their heads; loose white smocks concealed their everyday clothes, crossed with a crimson ribbon and decorated with five golden stars; beneath the smock thick yarn stockings and snow-boots appeared, rather spoiling the effect. One of these Wise Men staggered under an enormous five-cornered star, illuminated from within. They dashed into the ballroom, and each sang a song in turn. Dancing was stopped while they performed. Between each song or psalm the biggest Wise Man twirled his star, while the two smaller fenced. The Professor could not explain to me why they fenced, but he did con-

fide to me that the curious jigs they intoned were "sacred songs."

A collection was made, and the biggest of the three, majestically sweeping off the sugar-loaf hat of a lesser Wise Man, tipped the money into it.

Then they departed rejoicing, and I rejoiced also because their tuneless jigs were at an end.

Supper. All the different wines I looked on at supper, red, white, brown, and yellow, started a jazz dance of their own in my head.

After supper we returned to the ballroom to search for Bengt. Supper had taken some time. Now the scene was completely changed. The room was thick with a dim haze, partly heat, partly dust, partly human aroma. The large rings of dancers, formed by dainty little maids in soft white frocks crowned with really artistic paper caps, and smart little boys in sailor suits, bigger boys anything but smart—decidedly floppy, in fact—and flapper girls rather self-conscious and inclined to be patronising, had vanished.

A crowd of third-rate grown-ups had clustered in the doorway and held the floor, swaying stiffly and ungracefully to the strains of negroid melodies.

When I attempted to flee from the highly flavoured atmosphere, they jammed me in the doorway. It was for all the world like a tube railway at five o'clock, with a train coming in from the suburbs.

I asked the Professor who they were and whence they came, these mannerless loons.

"*Hoi polloi!* They are of the Bolshevist artisan class that has developed during the war," he replied. "Their wages have gone up; so have their opinions about themselves. They never had any manners, and they think they are God Almighty! What need have they for manners? You understand now why I ordered Bengt home. No boy of mine shall associate with this trash. I am conservative. This age is too democratic for me."

Then home. We tore along the roads at break-neck speed, the trees trimmed with rime frost, and a thick white mist in the air.

. . . . . .

The black-haired young doctor with the truculent black moustache has made a bid for the hand of the fair Karin. To his amazement and consternation, this offer has been mercilessly turned down.

I don't know what Professorinnan will have to say about it. It is a mercy she is away until the first fury has blown over.

Poor Karin! She looks more fed-up than ever. To be offered what you don't want, when you want something else awfully badly, must be a bit of a blow.

The Professor is annoyed and badly ruffled. He believes in matrimony for women. In his heart of hearts he imagines that it is all we are fit for. I stick up for Karin and at the moment am not popular with his highness. I met Karin in the passage just now, and I patted her hand encouragingly and beamed upon her. Karin sank in her usual pretty curtsey, eyes downcast. Was it my heated imagination, or did I experience just the faintest pressure on my hand in return?

I tried to cheer up the Professor.

"There are as good fish in the sea!" I said, knowing all the time that I was being horribly trite. The Professor shook his head.

"That is true!" he said stiffly. "But here in Sweden, we like our wives young. The bait is growing stale. I believe it."

"Oh! Rubbish!" I said—rudely, I admit.

"Think how Karin cooks! Think how pretty she is! And she never talks. That gives a husband such an unusual chance! Besides, the big fat officer. He is already making eyes. One dinner cooked by Karin was quite sufficient to set his thoughts pacing along the honeyed path that leads to matrimony. I hope she won't marry him. I like your Swedish food so much—and no one else could ever cook as Karin does."

The Professor took my mild joke seriously. Like all sensible men, he appreciates a first-class cook. "That is true!" he assented. "I would rather that Karin cooked for me than for that over-fed, chicken-hearted officer!"

I was smoking a cigarette with the Professor, after mid-day. He waxed eloquent on the subject of the spirit of adventure that still lurks in the Swede.

"They are, and always have been, citizens of the great world. In early days they emigrated to Germany and to the plains of northern Russia. They started a colony in Nijni-Novgorod and gradually spread over Russia, going down to the river to Constantinople and settling there. The

Turks own to a strain of Scandinavian blood in their veins. The Swedes wandered even farther —to Arabia and northern Africa. The world was their playground.

"The old spirit is not dead, and still the Vikings set out to conquer the world. In America, at the present day, there are well over six hundred thousand Swedes as against the population of six millions here. In Australia also they are to be found in large numbers."

. . . . . .

We had such an odd mixture at dinner to-night. Thick, white soup served with asparagus and peas, and with it we ate slabs of sweet sticky dark bread, thickly buttered, and with knife-thin slices of cheese spread upon the top. It was followed by rice meringue (beanless this time) served in a red earthenware pan, and when it was cut it floated in butter. No wonder my outlines are becoming less acute!

Sunday, January 9th

The wind has been blowing for the last two days, and all the snow has been shaken off the trees. It has snowed heavily in the night, and is snowing still more heavily now. Fairyland is reappearing.

January 10th

Torsten was ill at breakfast, consequently more anti-English than usual, if possible!

The Professor was comparing the English language with the Swedish.

"In the two languages you will find many words that are derived from the same source," he said, "but we have kept the consonants that make those words hard to pronounce, and you have dropped them."

"My teacher in English at the school," began Torsten, bombastically, "says English is the language of an effete and degenerate people, a people so lazy that they have made their language the easiest in the world to learn, because they will not

trouble themselves to pronounce a word that is hard."

"While you are expending your energy on your 'L's' and your 'H's,' we have conquered the world, my son," I retorted warmly. "Much use may your consonants do you! We are too practical a race to waste time over trifles of that kind. We can ask a direct question in English without dodging round the bush as you do, either calling a stranger by her Christian name or having to say, 'The "English miss," does she know that her nation is the most degenerate nation in the world?' "

I imitated Torsten's snuffle and side-long furtive look.

The Professor laughed heartily.

"She is right, Torsten, and your master is a fool. As a nation develops, it tends to simplification. We Swedes are for ever tinkering at our language, always altering our spelling. Much better do it once and for all time, and then turn our energies elsewhere."

. . . . . .

The doctor from the hospital and such a pretty sister came in to dinner. The sister had hands

like a little bird. She talked a little, a very little, English.

After dinner we had *Föreställning*. First, an imitation theatre in which all kinds of animals played a part. Then the well-worn conjuring outfit was produced. The doctor left us at half time to return to his hospital, and then the pretty sister waxed restive and said she really ought to go. She said farewell all around, and departed at five-fifty. At six Lars tapped on my door. Would I not come into the salon to eat nuts and apples and dates? I went, thinking it ungracious to refuse, but really pining for quiet as I felt far from well. There sat the pretty sister enthroned still; more halting English; how tired I get of it!

We sat round the polished birch table. Bengt came and asked me to have a "philippine" with him.

"Certainly," I said. "What shall the forfeit be?"

He retired behind his eyebrows to reflect over so weighty a matter.

"I know!" he cried. "If I win, no English lesson for a week!"

"And if you lose, three lessons a day!" chimed in Sigvard scornfully.

"Your mother's very ghost would haunt me," I said in horror, "if you were to win on such conditions."

We finally compromised on a sugar cake. The Pelman contest is to come off to-morrow—after the lesson.

The big, bold officer with the bald face is becoming more pressing in his attentions. Karin is looking more and more wistful. Dare she refuse to marry yet another eligible suitor? I am sure such a proceeding would be looked upon askance in Sweden, where men are still regarded as little tin gods, at least.

I wonder whether *he* is eligible, by the way, or in what eligibility consists, more especially for Karin.

With the looks and deportment of a deserted princess, and with the talent of a French *chef*—combined with the silence, mystery, and aloofness of the Sphinx—she would make an ideal wife for a certain type of man, who would regard her as a

most rare and precious jewel set in his matrimonial crown.

But the big bold officer is not this type of man. He would probably install poor Karin as lady-cook and bottle-washer-in-ordinary in some horrible little bare, dark flat perched up in the air somewhere, and reached by uninviting flights of not-too-clean stone stairs.

In a very short time he would install some sly-eyed Swedish jade as mistress-in-ordinary. Karin, with her innate reticence and her dreamy, artistic nature, could never satisfy all the carnal appetites of so gross a Swede. Poor Karin! If she is forced to wed him, it will be a horrible case of the pearl flung into the trough of a swine.

January 10th

Early this morning the bustle started! This is the day the Professor departs for Stockholm, and when he has a hustle on, everyone must. I stayed in my room to keep out of the way.

Sigvard came to excuse himself from a lesson

as he had to go to town on an errand for his father. Bengt did not turn up—neither did he excuse himself!

Second breakfast was a mixture of polite regrets to me; promises of a speedy return; funny stories; concluding with a stern homily to the boys in which I heard my name mentioned.

At twelve-thirty the Professor came and tapped at my door to bid me farewell.

He went off in a sledge, with Tǫrsten in attendance with two letters of mine to post,[1] which he promptly forgot, but his father remembered.

Unless I went on snow-shoes I could never reach the station, and I simply have not the pluck as yet to shuffle through the town on two sticks.

This afternoon Bengt and Sigvard were invited to run on snow-shoes behind a horse. A boy's ideal of a real good time. Lars felt distinctly aggrieved as he had not been included in the invitation. He went off there and then to ask to be allowed to take part in the expedition, but his demand was mercilessly turned down. So he set

[1] The most reliable place for posting letters is the post-box affixed to the guard's van.

out on some desperate errand of his own and never turned up to dinner.

We were seriously discussing sending out a search-party—my suggestion that Karin and I should start out on snow-shoes to seek for the prodigal being received with shrieks of ribald mirth—when Lars suddenly appeared, stolid and uncommunicative. His assertion that when he passed the church clock in the town the hands pointed to half-past three was received with cold incredulity, till Sigvard scornfully remarked that it might be true—that a tortoise could beat Lars on snow-shoes.

I had to take on all three boys after dinner. Bengt sat with an expression of subdued agony on his face, one eye fixed on the clock—he squinted fearsomely—until his hour was up, or, more strictly speaking, one minute before, when he sat up, took an added interest in life, and yelled: "Philippine!"

The cat being away (in more polite terms, the Professor), Torsten jibbed badly. I had to speak to him severely.

He finally compromised—as usual. One day Torsten will make a fine politician. If he might

show me the comic page of the *New York Tribune* (which had arrived via a parcel from America) and have the jokes explained, he would take up life's bitter little burdens on the morrow and start once more translating *Three Men in a Boat.*

Tuesday, January 11th

The boys are most polite now their father is away. He always kept them sitting at the table long after we had all finished, while he laboriously sought after the words he wanted.

"Silence!" he would thunder, thumping on the table, when some word proved more difficult than usual, while they would wriggle restlessly upon their chairs and furtively make grimaces at one another, as their free time slipped away.

Now they sit round and converse in English, translating any small joke that may arise; and at supper Torsten has constituted himself cheese-cutter-in-waiting to me. The Swedish art of cutting cheese still evades me. One thumb is planted firmly on the cheese, and then, with a skilful flank

movement, a swoop of the knife shaves a wafer-thin slice from the whole surface. Torsten cuts and snips and swoops until he achieves a wafer thin and large enough to be considered worthy of being offered while the others stand round him and implore him to hurry up.

After "mid-day," Karin conducts me into the salon and with great ceremony hands me cigarettes and matches, curtseys, and departs, for Karin is, like Martha, cumbered with much serving.

Has any governess in England ever been treated like this?

. . . . . .

Seven men in sheep's-wool coats and caps have just dashed down the drive on snow-shoes. The snow is whirling and dancing round in uncanny spiral columns. I think I will follow Sigvard's advice and not attempt an expedition to-day.

. . . . . .

This morning a ladder-cart drove slowly up the drive to the hospital in the snowstorm. On it was a red bed. Most things in Sweden are red—when they are not Reckitt's blue—from beds and

cheeks to houses, though the latter are sometimes painted an anæmic shade of green or pink.

Someone was lying on the bed covered with a wolf-skin fur. The jolting of the ladder-cart must have been terrible. Many patients travel for miles—Swedish miles—down that long, weary, northern road and through the unending forest.

. . . . . .

I had to reprove Torsten again this evening. I asked him at dinner when he was coming for his lesson. He said at five o'clock, if convenient. Five struck; a quarter past; still no sign of Torsten. I went out and tapped at his door and called. No answer. I tried the handle. The door was locked. I called again. Still no answer.

The waters of affliction that have washed over my defenceless head have helped to quell a naturally hasty temper. I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. I would make the rude imp sit up —when I got him. In the meantime I was not going to wait for him like a dog on his mat.

At five-thirty there came a blow on my door like the crack of doom.

I raised my eyebrows superciliously as Torsten burst in.

"Good evening, Torsten," I said icily. "I thought you said you were coming at five?"

Torsten wrinkled his nose at me. He was plainly in one of his most cussed moods.

"Of course, in England," I said serenely, "a *gentleman* who makes an appointment with a lady keeps it. He answers when she calls and does not lock his door and sulk within like a bear. Surely it is also so in Sweden? Nor does he announce himself at her door imitating an air-raid!"

Torsten turned the colour of beetroot. "Did I say five? Then I must beg your pardon. I am sorry for all you do not like."

He was so good for the rest of his lesson, taking reproof like a lamb, that I began to feel quite uneasy about him.

Wednesday, January 12th

Cold! It really is cold to-day.

I caught sight of myself in a shop-window.

The few wisps of hair that had escaped from my fur cap framed my face in white. Good heavens! Had my numerous afflictions turned my hair white —at last?

I hastily dragged off a glove and investigated. Thick rime frost crackled in my fingers, and the handkerchief in my coat pocket was frozen stiff as a board.

After I returned home, and while I was slowly thawing, the telephone rang outside my door, and, to my horror, Betty came in to say someone wished to speak to me. I got hopelessly tied up in the wool of the jumper I was knitting as I leapt, startled, to my feet. The last person who rang me up was the charming young man at the *Läns-residens*,[1] who was arranging about the re-visa-ing of my passport. He fancied he could speak English, but I failed to recognise or to track home the extraordinary noises he emitted at the other end of the wire. He had been so kind, I hated to hurt his feelings. . . .

I picked up the receiver very doubtfully.

"Dr. H. from the hospital. What time will you come out for a run on skis?"

[1] Governor's residence.

I almost fainted. Run on skis when I could barely stand upright, and had no correct knickers to stand up in!

"Good heavens!" I protested. "I cannot run on snow-shoes. I can barely walk!"

"We are bad also. I am from Skane.[1] What time?"

I put down the receiver and said something softly. Then I went and tapped on Torsten's door.

"Torsten, Dr. H. wants me to go out on skis to-day with a party."

I touched my forehead and raised my eyebrows.

Torsten grinned.

"What do you wish that I should say?"

"Anything. Get me out of it, and I am your friend for life!"

Torsten grinned again, shuffled to the receiver, and growled into the telephone for two minutes. Then he clicked his heels and bowed to it—sheer force of habit—muttered "*Tack*," and turned on his heel.

[1] In South Sweden.

"You are safe," he said with a shrug. "For how long I know not!"

Job's comforter!

In this again I see the hand of the Professor. I am to be amused and entertained even when he is not there to do it. What he and his wife do not see is this: if I came out here as a governess, I expect to be treated as a governess. To be regarded as a member of a jolly house-party when one has duties to perform is apt to unsettle the young. I have two more lessons to give to-day. How can I throw them up and go off at a moment's notice, more especially when neither of my employers is on the spot?

The boys go back to school to-morrow. To-night at six o'clock they attend the roll-call—the opening ceremony.

Torsten strolled into my room at seven. "There is a lecture to-night at the hospital—in Swedish, of course, with pictures. Would you care to go? Karin will take you. For me, I shall not go. It is a lecture from a missionary. *Usch!*"

I laughed at his disdainful face.

"No, thank you. In the English slang you swallow with such avidity—I am not taking any!

Please greet Karin from me and say I do not wish to attend."

Torsten clicked his heels, bowed, and departed.

Up in the hall at supper, I asked Karin, via Torsten, if she had wished to go to the lecture. She smiled her little smile and shook her head with unusual vehemence. Her father is a *priester*, as Torsten will persist in describing that vocation in life. That may explain her vehemence.

Torsten was interested in the *Graphic*. On the front page was the picture of the seething crowd outside a bargain-sale shop in London. Torsten did not thoroughly grasp the psychological side of the situation. As I came downstairs to my room, I heard him exclaim in his most grating tones:

"*Usch!* Idle people. All English are luxury animals!"

Thursday, January 13th

It started snowing again last night, and has snowed, off and on, all day. I woke up in the night in the grip of the usual Swedish thirst.

Everywhere in Sweden—in the shops, in the railway-carriages, on the table by the bedside—there stands a carafe of water and a glass. My carafe had not been filled.

I think all the maids went out on the spree last night to enjoy a real beano before our life of seclusion begins under the grim eyes of the pious *Fröken* who is arriving this very afternoon from Stockholm with Lisa and Valentin.

I suppose as Professorinnan is away so much, and I, an English lady of uncertain age (quite uncertain enough to be perfectly safe) am left alone with her husband and the boys, with Karin as sole chaperon, it has occurred to Professorinnan that a more adequate chaperon had better be provided.

The reason for the arrival of the *Fröken*—that has been handed to me for inspection—is that the Fröken Ingrid Petersen has lived in England for some years as a nurse at the London Hospital, and, as she can speak English very well, she may prove useful to me as a companion and safety-valve.

I went out for a short walk, braving the wind and the snow, falling into drifts and out again.

Bengt and I spent most of his lesson-time examining maps of Lapland. He showed me where he had been and dilated in English—which is getting quite fluent, and without a trace of accent—on the joys of his two weeks' trip and the beauty thereof. I hope to go there in the summer.

Then there was a wild burst of shouting from the smaller fry. The sledge had arrived from the station. I went to inspect the new arrival. Short, dark, grim of a grimness! High-nosed, with a tendency—a strong tendency—to look down it. What I call a school-marm type.

Her face was a study at dinner. Valentin growing obstreperous, Torsten flicked him hard just on the very tip of his nose. It must have hurt horribly.

Will she interfere, I wonder? Will she prove merely boresome? I must, like Dr. Johnson, "withdraw attention and think about Tom Thumb!"

Thank heaven for a room of my own to which I can retire like the snail into its shell.

We had the national Thursday dinner to-day, a dinner which, I believe, is served up in every

house in Sweden, probably even in the palace.

Pea-soup, thick, delicious, with which slices of fat ham are handed round. Small plates are provided, on which the ham is chopped up into quite small pieces. The true elegants eat it on their plates. I tip mine wholesale into my soup.

Pancakes—such pancakes! (Karin is a first-class cook.) Served with what taste like freshly plucked strawberries swimming in their own juice, grown on the estate up here in this far northern clime! Or with stewed cranberries—the woods are thick with them. I prefer the cranberries. They understand how to cook them in Sweden, with plenty of sugar.

Lisa, with one eye tied up, looking like a character out of Stevenson with her wicked black patch, sat opposite me at dinner and beamed upon me. She is undergoing treatment for a slight squint, poor child: how the black patch must worry her! But she is so pretty that it seems worth while making her go through with it.

"Spoon!" she cried, waving it ingratiatingly in the air, to show that during her visit to Stockholm she had not forgotten her English. "Nose!"

She grasped her own firmly and shoved it heavenwards, much to the delight of all her brothers.

"Moog!" She nearly knocked Karin's eye out as she swung her silver mug in a merry circle.

She crept into my room when I was teaching Lars. She gazed at me reproachfully, and, as I did not give her my undivided attention, she stalked in her stateliest manner to the door. There she stood and considered. After all, even if she were not the only pebble on the beach, at the moment it was more entertaining than upstairs with a tired-out *Fröken.*

Friday, January 14th

Bored stiff! Now the *Fröken* has arrived, the boys talk to her all the time. She is an old and treasured friend, and brought up most of them. Except for a chorus every now and then, started by Lisa and joined in lustily by the smaller fry, of "Dalk English, boys!" scarcely a word of my own language is spoken.

Sigvard and Torsten have both excused them-

selves. They are going to a ball to-night and must prepare to-morrow's lessons before they start. I cannot imagine Torsten at a ball. Swedish boys do not have a half-holiday on Saturday.

Bengt had already bargained—lazy little wretch—that if he did an hour and a quarter of English yesterday he might escape altogether to-day.

I went out into the garden and took a snapshot of Lisa and her small brothers—Lisa, with her black patch, looking very roguish and rather sweet.

Lars was the only boy to have a lesson. It is extraordinary how he is picking up English. He has already started to translate one of Elsa Beskow's books, and he roared to-day when I asked him if he had ever met Father Rime Frost in the wood.

"Such an animal I have never seen!" he said stoutly.

His brothers call him "pork." He *is* rather the shape of a well-filled sausage. I see the ridiculous resemblance every time I look at him.

He scoffed just as sturdily over the idea of King Winter having an ice palace in the forest.

"Such things are not!" he said, shaking his closely-shaved bullet head seriously. "I have

walked *vorbei*[1] the palace of our King in Stockholm, but inside I have never seen."

Saturday, January 15th

The boys went to a dance last night, and raced home on skis behind a horse. The great attraction, apparently, of these friendly balls is the going home. The boys chaperon the girls. No one is fetched from a ball unless she is too small or too dull to prove interesting.

The favourite girl must arrive home with the milk, desperately tired. Is it not human nature that the duller the girl the sooner deposited on her own doorstep?

The pride of the last girl escorted home by a crowd of boys!—or do they split up, and each pair with his pet partner? Alas, I have not been initiated into the inner mysteries of the Walk-Home-After.

I have enquired, because Talleyrand is reported to have remarked that a question is never indis-

[1] *Vorbei*—past. Lars occasionally mixes up English and German.

creet, though an answer may be, but I have been rebuffed with coyness and the tell-tale warning of an early blush.

Bengt has a beautiful shiny paper top-hat as a cotillon favour, and Sigvard a jockey's cap.

The Professor wired from Stockholm to know how we were all getting along. He feels a bit nervous about the Fröken Ingrid Petersen. He need not worry. Now I know her better, I like her, and I have heard Karin laugh! I have never heard her laugh before. She is like me, desperately homesick and lonely, and Sister Ingrid is a real godsend to her.

One can coax a twinkle into Sister Ingrid's grim eye—the right one. She rigidly disapproves of women smoking, I can see that, but she sees to it, none the less, that I am provided with cigarettes in plenty, despatching unwilling boys on their bicycles to the town to buy me the very best. Professor's orders! I may not even buy my own cigarettes.

Sunday, January 16th

Sister Ingrid came into my room and asked me if I would care to drive in a sledge to see the Lapplanders. I accepted her invitation with much pleasure.

We started out after second breakfast, Sister Ingrid, Lisa, and I in one sledge, Karin, Lars, and Valentin in the other.

We skimmed along the crackling snow. It was most exhilarating. There were high banks on each side to catch us if we skidded. Right through the town we flew, and out beyond it into another eternal fir-forest. It was intensely cold. Sister Ingrid was very anxious about Lisa. She kept on pinching and rubbing the child's cheeks, which peeped rosily out from her close-fitting ermine bonnet, and she persistently held her astrakhan muff before Lisa's face, which the latter must have found rather trying as the poor mite could get no fresh air. As Lisa wore her close-fitting ermine bonnet, an ermine coat buttoned up round her plump little throat, an ermine muff, and her legs enclosed in close-fitting gaiters, I did not feel she could come to any great harm.

"*Fryser du, Lisa?*" ("Are you cold?") Sister Ingrid kept on saying, and Lisa, nearly asphyxiated for want of fresh air, rolled her head sleepily against her nurse's shoulder and murmured that her one desire in life was to be put to bed.

The sky was grey, and it threw grey shadows over the snow; most of the people who fled past us on snow-shoes wore grey sweaters and grey woollen caps. It seemed a grey, cheerless world, peopled with flitting shadows, also grey, who bowed and swirled and raced in an abandon of grey despair.

It was quite a relief to look at the horses pulling the sledges or that trotted swiftly past, dragging boys and girls behind them hanging on by long ropes and raising clouds of powdery snow as their snow-shoes glided over the icy roads. The horses at least were brown and warm.

We were hailed by one party on skis. The two drivers drew up, and an animated conversation ensued. We were on the wrong tack, apparently. Sister Ingrid joined in the palaver. "*Vänd!*" ("Turn!") she kept on calling out, but the driver pointed with his whip; it was impossible to turn at present; the road through the forest was nar-

row, and sloped away abruptly on both sides. Had we attempted to turn we should have been simply tipped out among the trees.

Another road was taken. Once more the trees, heavily draped in snow, flew past; once more we met a noisy crowd on skis, a few melancholy conscripts in their ugly grey and dark blue uniforms and their white sheep's-wool caps, so much more becoming than the hideous comic-opera tricornes they wear during the warmer season; the drivers jerked out questions, the conscripts shook their heads vigorously. Sister Ingrid upraised her harsh voice once more. She looked angry and annoyed. We turned yet again.

"It is very pity!" she said to me.

"What is?" I said. "I did not understand what the recruits said."

"They are no longer here, the Lapps and their animals. Yesterday they went far away." She waved both her arms above her head. "It is very pity."

I was disappointed. I had brought with me my camera, safetly tucked away in my muff, and all for nothing. It would have been the chance of a lifetime to have seen the Lapps.

After dinner at four—circus. The folding doors leading to the dining-room are pulled open —perhaps a foot. On the farther side stands a table. On the table a circle of brown cardboard is pinned loosely through its centre to a board underneath.

On the cardboard ring are tin horses, with fairies hovering on their backs. There is a ring-master with a long whip in his hand, performing dogs; in fact, everything the heart of a child could desire.

Lars, behind the sliding doors, slowly revolves the cardboard ring. The horses gallop past; so do the performing dogs, erect on their hind legs. The fairies retain their uncertain position. Truly a most impressive circus.

Lars is an economist in pleasure. Only one or two animals are put on at a time. Between each show the doors close, and we clap our approval. The circus would go on indefinitely if we did not rebel at last; and, after clapping lustily, make a bolt for freedom, calling out "*Slut*"—the end.

Is not Sunday evening the time appointed by a merciful Providence for writing letters?

Not for long!

Lars appears and demands my presence upstairs.

Every Sunday evening we solemnly collect round a table and munch nuts and apples whilst the Swedish members of the party talk together, their voices dying away into the curious mysterious whisperings in which so many of them end a sentence.

At half-past six the small children are shooed off to bed. They retire to the nursery, and through the open door their shrill voices can be heard arguing and laying down the law on all possible subjects. Then there is a sudden silence. There is always a mighty struggle to be first in the bath. With a gurgle and patter of bare feet, Lisa, stark naked, comes dashing out of the nursery door down the passage to the bathroom. Olavus Petri, arrayed in Adam's first suit, follows, tearing after Lisa, shouting at the top of his voice, head forward, hands stretched out behind. Valentin is a bad third, but a mysterious smile lights up his little flat-nosed prize-fighter countenance as he strolls bathwards. Valentin is up to some deviltry!

Sigvard, who has been into the town to visit a friend, turns up to join the assembly in the hall. He and Torsten sit side by side, both in grey sweaters, grey knickers strapped at the knee, and

tightly-gartered grey stockings. Sigvard is just like a prince in a fairy-tale, fair-haired, clear-eyed, proud, and reserved. He is translating an extraordinary French exercise which deals with Joseph and his brethren, and our duty to love our brethren, even when they are harsh to us. Personally, I always felt a sneaking sympathy with Joseph's brethren. As a child, he seemed to me simply insufferable. The characters in the Old Testament, held up to me as shining examples of all that a gentleman should strive to be, never came up to my youthful expectations. David I considered beyond the pale, and Joseph a smug prig.

Torsten, with his short, straight-cut fringe roofing his bulging forehead; his truculent, three-cornered nose, which he wrinkles up and snuffles through perpetually; his keen, cold, small eyes, peering suspiciously through enormous tortoise-shell spectacles; the whole unattractive physiognomy redeemed by the humour lurking in the lines round the mouth. I could picture him quite easily a product of the Middle Ages, developing into a Mazarin, born to scheme and plot and to scorn those he considers his intellectual inferiors, but never to achieve anything really great, because his

knowledge of men is culled from books and not from the living volume of mankind.

Sister Astrid has come in. She is studying the two boys as they sit side by side. Suddenly a gleam of amusement flashes across her face. She looks at me and caresses the little finger of her right hand, then her eyes turn towards Sigvard once again. I follow the gaze of her laughing eyes. On Sigvard's finger he sports a little golden ring, so self-consciously that I wonder I did not notice it before. As he sees my attention riveted on his hand, he twists the finger under and throws back his haughty head.

"He is beginning so young," Sister Ingrid whispers, with her sardonic curl of the lip. "The young always rush into trouble."

Enter Lars, barefooted, in his night-shirt, open at the neck; he is about to select his supper—a serious business to Lars. He shuffles in, his head thrust well forward, his eyes glancing swiftly from right to left. He picks up a plate negligently and draws near the *smörgås bord*, like an acolyte approaching an altar. He helps himself to some smoked salmon, a little *foie-gras*, four rolled herrings, half a gherkin, some cheese, eleven slices of

sweet white bread—may I be forgiven for the curiosity that prompted me to count them—a mug of milk, a cup of tea, an apple, four chocolates (one is the legal allowance—but why strain at a gnat?).

He shuffles back to the children's low white table in the distant nursery, balancing his little lot with all the skill of a *troll*. He spreads out his scanty store, and, head bent voraciously, falls to like a hungry wolf.

In about five minutes he returns, and, after a wistful glance, as if seeking something to stay the pangs of an invincible hunger, he packs his plate, mug, cup, and spoon neatly away on the second shelf of the glass table, sneaks a handful of chocolates when no one in authority is looking, bows good night to us all from the back of his neck, and climbs aldermanically into his bed, which groans loudly as he drops his too solid weight upon it. I wonder idly if Lars will echo that groan before the night is out!

The last to appear in fancy evening dress is Sigvard. He comes strolling proudly from his bedroom to the hall, via the nursery, on his way to his bath. There is a more private route, but he scorns it. The two hospital nurses glance up and

giggle. Sigvard is also in his night-shirt, worked with fine red stitching. The stroking of the gathers is a small masterpiece. His strong, muscular legs and feet are bare, but on his head a red-and-yellow jockey-cap is placed at a jaunty angle. He won it in a cotillon last evening, at one of his numerous balls. I think he knows how well he looks in it. The ring has been removed from his finger!

January 17th

I was to have taken Sister Astrid's photograph to-day, but it was too dark, and the Doctor, who was to have taken her out on skis behind his horse, had to operate in the theatre, so I went for a walk on the scrunching snow up the great road that winds east and north under a grey sky. It was just like a mild winter day in England, with a hint of rain in the air; the trees in the forest were ridding themselves of their snowy burdens; it was as if a *troll* had passed that way waving his wand, changing Fairyland into the land of gloom.

Utter silence reigned, except for the slithering

of the snow burdens from the yielding boughs of the gloomy firs and the occasional tinkle of a sledge-bell as the sledge passed slowly on its way, piled up with heavy loads of snow-encrusted wood.

A sledge passed me in which a young woman was seated. She had enormous eyes of the shade one reads about in novels—violet—and they regarded me with the Northern gaze, always tinged with melancholy, from under the shadow of her high astrakhan cap. Beautiful and sad; I wondered whither she was bound, up the long, never-ending road that seems to lead to nowhere.

As Bengt and I stood at the window, before settling down to a lesson, a girl walked up the drive. She was dressed from head to foot in grey wool with a dark blue stripe running through it. She wore a brightly coloured vest, striped in bars of yellow and red; a sharply-pointed wool cap sat on her shapely head, beneath which two long pigtails streamed, bound with what looked like red tape.

"What an extraordinary-looking girl!" I said.

Bengt looked at me pityingly.

"Don't you know a Lapp girl when you see one?" he asked incredulously. "She is probably

coming from the hospital. They have many Lapland patients there, and many gypsies. They adore the chief surgeon and call him 'Little Jack,' even to his face. They absolutely decline to consult any of the staff; none of his assistants are good enough for them. They are some of them very rich—much richer than my father."

January 18th

The middle of January, the coldest month in Sweden! Everything is dripping. It is just like a mild spring day. Men are busy in the town piling up the snow on carts and wheeling it away. Where they put it I know not. The river, at least, is still frozen over and used as a highway. People who live on the island opposite can now reach their houses on the farther shore in about twenty minutes, instead of taking two hours to go round over the bridge when there is no ice-road across.

It is such a comic sight to see stout and staid Swedish matrons and elderly prosperous-looking

merchants in fur-lined coats, with high caps of astrakhan pulled down over their foreheads, skimming along on what is described in Sweden as a kick-sledge—a small wooden chair fastened securely to iron runners, with a raised piece for the foot. The owner of the sledge stands behind the chair with both hands grasping the back, resting one foot on the iron support, while he pushes himself along by means of the other foot, using his toe lightly as a propeller. Sometimes two people use the same sledge, their toes touching the ground in unison, and they fly along raising a cloud of finely-powdered snow. Generally the front seat is empty, but sometimes a child is enthroned in state, or a parcel is lashed to the chair.

I am sitting here writing with my double windows wide open.

It is still holiday-time; the girls' school is closed. The town is all agog with blushing flappers. I never remember seeing so many pretty girls before; their Northern complexions are lovely. Pretty, but insolent, they look. They contrive somehow to convey insolence even when they crook their knee in a curtesy. When a Swede bows or a woman curtesys, they never smile in

greeting. The women dip, casting sidelong one swift scrutinising look.

Many middle-aged Swedes are far from prepossessing, but they are supremely unconscious of their own shortcomings—their drab, flabby faces, turn-up noses, protuberant bodies, badly-shaped legs, etc.—but they seem ever on the search for the weak points in others, and they smile in a furtive, feline fashion as they pass on their way after having made their catty-pussy greetings.

The sunset to-night is glorious. A broad band of crimson, a grey bar, a band of saffron, a brown bar, a deep band of turquoise, the heavy grey-black clouds above reflecting back the crimson glow.

Two nurses to dinner. Sister Ingrid sits and tells them of the glories of the London Hospital. Sister Anne ripostes with a lurid description of how the nursing profession in England has degenerated. Sister Ingrid translates and questions me, plainly troubled at this sweeping statement. I give it unqualified denial.

Sister Anne reveals the typical Swedish trait —it would be amusing were it not so irritating. I hear her murmur something about the Director,

and she shuts her lips tight and nods her head. She *knows!* "Naturally the 'English miss' would deny it. But the statement is quite true, none the less!"

It is a queer dinner-party. Three Swedish nurses all busily discussing delightful hospital scandals and telling one another childish stories. The boys—Torsten and Sigvard—sitting and arguing in Swedish. Lars stoking steadily. Valentin crouching back in his chair regarding his brethren out of the corners of his shrewd, watchful eyes. Lisa and Olavus Petri talking incessantly. Lisa eating shamelessly the while, Olavus Petri laying down his knife and fork (taken into use, with tears, on his sixth birthday, and, like most new accomplishments, presenting difficulties) to accentuate his points with his long, square-tipped hands with their curiously flexible fingers. Karin sitting opposite me, her face set in rigid lines of sorrow, her eyes far away, her lips pressed together in stern self-repression. Never speaking, now and then just faintly smiling.

To-morrow the boys have a holiday. Every winter they are given one day off for skating,

directly the river is reported safe, and another holiday for a long day on skis. They have already had their skating holiday; now it is the turn for skis.

In spite of the pitiless cold and the hard thick ice up here in the north, terrible ice accidents happen every winter. During the skating season no boy is supposed to go out without his clasp-knife attached firmly to a chain round his waist. Should he strike an ice-hole, or a treacherous piece of thin ice where currents run too swiftly, he has two things to remember: first, to grab his knife and to stab it deep into the ice as he feels himself sinking—the chain, attached firmly to the knife and to his body, will hold him up; the second thing, never to face the ice on which he is attempting to scramble, or again and again his legs will be sucked under. He must turn his back before he attempts to hoist himself out of the water.

A sledge jingles past up the drive. Shrill childen's voices, raised in excitement, reach me across the snow. Valentin and Olavus Petri driving home in state from a dance with the fatherly Mandren, the driver. What boy in England

would not go to a dance if he could drive home afterwards in a sledge!

A perfect day for snow-shoes. The boys are lucky. Bengt is too ill to have a lesson, but Sigvard came for an hour with the *Saga-bok* of Elsa Beskow. The story about the changeling. Sigvard has a way of hurling a Swedish word at my head and casting haughty glances of disdain at me when I cannot at once leap into the breach with the right translation. He then turns one shoulder on me, shrugs both of them, and picks up the dictionary with the points of his fingers.

Torsten hates looking up a word. He will furrow his forehead, scratch his nose, make wild shots, abuse the English, fall back on German or Latin. If I say, "Look it up, Torsten," he grows suddenly deaf.

I would never have believed that within four short months of leaving England I should have such a difficulty in rendering the *mot juste:* very often the *mot* itself will not come forward to make its bow. As Lars said, tapping the top of his spinal cord:

"It has come as far as here. It will not come any farther!"

Sunday, January 23rd

Very cold to-day—thirty degrees below, Celsius. My window having been blown open by a biting, boisterous wind during the night, I dreamt uncomfortable dreams in which I was freezing to death and finally woke up to the real situation.

I went to the station to post letters on the train. On the way I fell into a snow-drift. I passed a house covered over with a slanting wall of snow—a drift of some kind blown together by the wind, reaching up over the roof, only one window left exposed.

Many people passed me on snow-shoes, attached by long ropes to horses. Two men whizzed past me, ski-joring behind a motor; it looked horribly dangerous. They raised clouds of snow as they fled on their headlong course, bending double to preserve their precarious balance.

Sister Astrid came to dinner at three-thirty and proposed an expedition on snow-shoes up the forest road to the big silent lake at the bend, in the moonlight. I jumped at her proposal, and we started off.

Taking her advice, I had changed into a high-

necked jumper, a very stout skirt, and knickers. I had not reckoned on Karin accompanying us. She stopped every ten minutes or so and kept us loitering in an icy blast while she fumbled rather helplessly with her shoes and straps. I grew colder and colder.

It was a lovely night, moonlight and scintillating stars. The snow was ice-bound and thrummed as we skimmed along on its glittering surface. The wind had shaken all the snow from the trees, and they made dark, eerie patches against the virgin snow. It was exhilarating—or would have been had Karin not been there. Finally I got so cold I dared not linger any longer. I turned and ran home on my own—and I had set my mind on seeing the big lake by moonlight!

I ran staggeringly. I dared the perils of the steep descent that leads down past the house, my skis crossed, and I fell headlong. I have a bump beneath my knee as big as a pigeon's egg.

Sister Astrid saw me crash and came swooping to my rescue—rather scared. She was relieved when I sat up, rubbed my head, and laughed. "*Unkraut vergeht nicht*," I reminded her.

Monday, January 24th

I gave Lisa quite a long lesson this morning. She was with me for an hour, working most industriously, threading strips of pale pink paper through a shiny blue mat. I believe the mat is meant for me when it is finished. Lisa, with her black patch over one eye, her head turned sideways like a little cock-sparrow, listened with much interest to the life-history of Simple Simon; chanted Ten Little Nigger-Boys; made me understand that Olavus Petri could whistle like a god, but that she and Valentin could not; and finally, suddenly bored, announced that she was going upstairs, and departed.

Tuesday, January 25th

Bengt is ill. Temperature nearly 100. Sister Ingrid is in despair. The doctor suspects a touch of pneumonia. Max started his illness the same way. Ingrid told the doctor the other boys had colds and yet would not stay home from school. He gave prompt orders that their temperatures

were to be taken, and if above normal they were to be popped at once into bed.

Sister Ingrid skilfully rounded them up after second breakfast. Sigvard and Lars both had temperatures and were promptly ordered off to bed. Torsten and Valentin passed the test with flying colours.

I went for a walk by the river. One gets all the sun that is shining there, and the Northern clear light is glorious.

. . . . . .

Sweden is so long (length without breadth, the Swedes describe it) that the people in the south appear to be a completely different race from the people in the north. The Professor says that the Swedish language as spoken in Stockholm is appalling. The best Swedish is spoken at Upsala, the Oxford of Sweden.

The Danes apparently hate the Swedes, and, though their language is very similar, will pretend not to understand when addressed by a Swede. "Danish is no language for men," the Professor declares. "It is too pretty-pretty. On

a beautiful woman's lips it sounds charming; on a plain woman's lips or a man's—revolting."

Thursday, January 27th

Cold, eighteen degrees below, Celsius, and frightfully slippery. I sat down twice on my way through the town, both times quite gracefully—but with vigour. I went along by the river and revelled in the glorious Swedish sun. Torsten says I am illogical and a pagan to worship the sun; that only a few "benighted black trash" do so. Torsten is very sweeping in his statements. I was told by a Theosophist the other day that it is to Zoroaster and his teaching that we owe the purifying of our towns, our suppression of disease, etc. The wisest woman I know is a sun-worshipper. She lives in a little round tower on a certain shore where the sun always seems to be shining, and there she works in her garden and worships the sun.

. . . . . .

I bore my yellow paper, official forerunner of a parcel awaiting me, to the post-office to have it visa-ed, signed, and torn in half; the fair, fat gentleman who serves me first, no matter who may be before me, kept one half, handing me back the other, together with yet another yellow paper, which enlightened me as to what the parcel contained—Devonshire cream toffee!

I slithered down the steep hill which leads to the Customs. Only by walking in the snow-drift heaped high at the side of the road could I preserve my balance. It was frozen hard, and crackled as I stamped along, but at least my feet sank in a bit and gave me some kind of a grip and a foothold.

I marched into the room where the minor officials sit to brood, the while they solemnly pick their teeth; one exactly like a fox, the other with a curious bumpy nose.

I held out my papers, bowed, and said good day. They smiled upon me, then began to search through the book of entries. The toffee had been awaiting me for some time, and it proved as illusive as the Pimpernel. At last, however, we ran it to earth.

The fox-man made cabalistic signs in the book, and then, seizing a bundle of enormous keys, which made me think of Ainsworth's *Tower of London*, unlocked a low door and disappeared within. Presently he came out, carrying two parcels with an air about them that suggested London—quite unmistakably. The corrugated-nosed man followed, with what looked like a small hat-box in his hand.

My toffee!

The parcels were carried into the theatre and laid upon the operating-table! The foxy man carefully undid every string of the two first parcels, passing his fingers under the seals and forcing them gently upwards.

He laid bare a neat, wine-coloured woollen frock and some stockings.

Corrugated-nose opened the toffee hat-box and regarded the contents with a grin.

I believe it was strictly against Swedish Customs etiquette, but I waved my hand towards the box and invited him to partake. They have undone and done up so many parcels for me, and it is not correct to tip. I was only too pleased to make some small return. He looked at me blandly.

I bethought me of Karin's pretty way with toast in the evenings and with the chocolates she hands round.

I made a little dip and pointed again to the tin—it was not mine yet, until it had been weighed. "*Var så god,*" I said coaxingly ("Please").

They ought not to have listened to my siren voice, but they did. They both helped themselves with a broad grin—looking as solemn as judges when the nice sailor man who speaks English came sternly in at the door to weigh up my parcels and reckon up the damage. They looked even solemner when behind my nice sailor man they discovered the boss of the whole show, grim, square, morose. He entered on noiseless feet, poked his hard nose into my woollen frock, slid his horny hands under my shrinking stockings, opened the toffee-tin. I contemplated offering him also some of the spoil, but I refrained.

I caught the foxy man's eye. He almost winked. I am ashamed to say that I did—quite.

I passed the ordeal with flying colours. My nonchalance seemed to affect the grim man in my favour. A Swedish damsel who had followed

me into the room stood in stolid silence while the foxy man fetched out of the secret chamber ten enormous packages two by two, each one done up in a sketchy covering of straw and newspaper. I left the damsel still staring stolidly into space, the foxy man on his knees preparing to tackle the packages (how in the world was he going to do them up again?), and the grim man glowering at them in noncommittal silence.

I wanted to see what was hidden beneath the fragile covering, but my corrugated-nosed man led me away to sign the book in three places and to pay him his thirty öre.

I know the ropes by this time. I walk into the room across the passage, where the sailor man sits, together with a fiercely black-bearded brigand. The brigand bows most courteously to me over his papers, and I bow back equally politely.

My sailor man says: "Three kroner, thirty-five öre," very distinctly, as one does to a child, an imbecile, or a foreigner, and then adds cheerfully in English, "You will be ruined. Very expensive."

I smile at him and agree as I gather up my change and a signed receipt and depart.

My nosey man has lashed my parcels firmly together. He bends almost double as he hands them to me. I know that the sweets I offered him, and some more he annexed when he thought I did not see the theft, are nestling stickily in his pocket, to be given to his grandchildren when he goes home this afternoon—the Customs close at two.

The Swedish schoolmasters are a quaint crowd. The extraordinary yarns they spin their pupils in their great simplicity of belief inspire a pitying wonder.

Their petty spite towards England and France is amazing. Torsten comes home snuffling with smug malice, primed to the lips with the dear old German propaganda we all know so well.

The individual they may put up with—even mildly like. But when it is a question more especially of England as a nation, then there is the bitter sneer, the curling lip, the muttered low sentence, at which the others glance at one another and smile furtively.

Friday, January 28th

My pupils are decreasing by degrees. Lars has been moved from his bed in the nursery into Sigvard's room. As each boy uses his bedroom as a bed-sitting-room, it is a bit of a trial to impart the rudiments of the English language to Lars while a circle of Sigvard's school friends sit round yawning or giggling or regarding me with overtly hostile looks. Lars has now been transported, thank goodness, into the sunny room where Professorinnan does her weaving.

Sister Ingrid hinted gently at breakfast this morning that Lars's lessons in English might be given a miss while his temperature was so high. I concurred at once. She is, I fancy, a little jealous in regard to her flock. But she is a dear. Straight as a die and always so sweet to me. She tells me she dreaded coming up here to take over the establishment with a strange "English miss" thrown in. "You looked so proud when I met you," Ingrid gurgled. "I could not sleep that first night. I cried and cried."

"And now you laugh, you giddy little kipper," I said, digging her playfully in the ribs. Ingrid

threw up her hands, giggled, and fled headlong down the passage.

Breakfast is over, eleven-thirty. Next pupil at three-fifteen. I do not think I shall go out. Sister Ingrid says it is fearfully cold. I have strained my wretched heart by tumbling about in my snow-shoes, and without them the only safe means of transport is to go on all fours.

I shall stay in, write up my diary, study my Swedish grammar, and divert myself by dipping into *Hypatia.*

Hypatia used to bore me stiff; now it interests me. Torsten says I am lacking in logic, so I study the harangues of Raphael Eben-Ezra while he reasons with himself or others. I have already twice beaten Torsten in argument, and I have retired from the field with all honours as a result of my labours. Torsten, of course, includes all his brethren. They have no English sporting instincts, no idea of fair play; ten to one, and all speaking at once, is their idea of a fair argument with a lady. Torsten is growing more wary in his tactics. He is hedging a lot.

I wonder how much longer I can remain here? The loneliness, the monotony of life! Shall I

stay out my year? If my pupils go on diminishing like this, I might as well pack up my traps and go. Professorinnan and Max first departing to the south, one in search of rest, the other in search of health. Next the Professor. Then Bengt laid low with an illness strangely like Max's breakdown; and now Lars, whose cold—neglected in spite of the obvious delicacy of his brothers—has taken on a more serious form. Karin and I are the only two of the household who have stuck to our posts during the last four months. We have never retired to bed—except at night, of course. Touch wood!

Professorinnan has a curious collection of English books, bought in her unwedded youth when she had a little time to spare. Lytton's *Pelham;* it interested me greatly, in spite of its pompous style. *The Somers,* an old friend, none of the Swedish boys would read it—the book was about Russia! They regarded my suggestion as to its perusal as a subtle act of Russian propaganda on my part. *The Garden of Allah; Black Spaniel;* Ruffini's *Dr. Antonio; The Blue Veil; Moral Tales,* by Maria Edgeworth; *Stepping Heavenwards,* by Mrs. E. Prentiss—she seemed so cock-

sure of her reception there! I skimmed through the book out of curiosity. Its egotism took my breath away. *Misunderstood*, of course. How curiously morbid, pious, and introspective people were forty to fifty years ago! *Travels and Discoveries*—come, we are getting on! *The Crisis*, Winston Churchill; a book I love, though American politics always tend to corrugate my brow.

Last, the Swedish handbook on England—Morel's *The Truth about the War!*

Torsten asked for his lesson early before dinner. From the muffled sounds now proceeding through the wall from next door, I gather he is boxing.

Suddenly the whole house shakes; blows are hammered on the door frantically. Were I not one of a family of twelve I should dash to the rescue, hair on end! As it is, I loll back in my armchair and smile tolerantly. The attack, violent to start with, crescendoes.

I hear Sister Ingrid running, fear in her feet. Then a laugh.

"What! Lisa!"

The opposite sex has a wonderful attraction for

Lisa, aged four. I have seen her, little charming coquette that she is, when Lars gave a dinner-party to seven comrades, sidle up to an oaf, put her face under his, and gurgle, much to that oaf's discomfort.

From the fastness of the distant nursery Lisa has scented her quarry. Down the stairs she trots and reaches on tiptoe for the handle of Torsten's door. It turns in her hand but does not yield. She tries again. Then the truth dawns. She has been locked out!

Silently, as is her way, she retreats, and then hurls the whole weight of her plump little body against the door, with no result except bruises. She hears a low exultant laugh from inside the room. She hurls herself again and yet again, white with fury at the crossing of her imperious will. Then she falls to and kicks and bangs. Still no sound escapes her tightly closed lips.

Lisa has not yet learnt the bitter lesson that the battle is not always to the persistent.

Snow is falling, steadily, persistently. The sky is grey. The snow looks dirty white. The distant mountains have taken on a slate-like hue. A man

walks across the distant river resembling nothing so much as a cautious beetle, digging at the snow with his stick as he nears the bank, to be certain that its treacherous surface does not conceal any lurking ice-holes. He need not be nervous; the ice is firm and hard, and wooden triangles have been placed to mark the spots where the ice has been cut away.

Sledges, open sledges, drive past towards the hospital. The men and women seated in them are closely wrapped in long-haired furs from head to foot. Great fur lapels fasten their caps down firmly over their ears. They look like monstrous animals as they crouch down in the sledges, cowering under their heavy rugs.

Horribly wet and uncomfortable they must be; and many of them have driven for miles; some of them have taken two or three days to get here, driving through the forest from some isolated settlement and then down that never-ending road that runs for scores of miles north.

Ingrid and I in the nursery, Ingrid seated in a diminutive chair solemnly sewing. I restlessly pacing up and down, staring out of the window at the forest draped in snow, the laden trees looking

like huge white magicians waiting for the signal to wake into life; chasing Lisa, shrieking with joy, round and round the nursery; on hands and knees, crawling across the floor bearing a triumphant but rather weighty Lisa riding proudly on my back.

Exhaustion intervening, I fling myself on to the fur rug, and, fending off the attacks of Lisa, indignant at the loss of so restive a steed, I turn my attention to Ingrid.

"Sister Ingrid! Don't you ever get tired of always doing your duty in that state of life, etc.?"

Ingrid raises her head and gapes at me. "One must do one's duty! Yes! It is dull sometimes, but the good God wills it."

"What is the good God going to do about the men who have just gone on strike?"

Sister Ingrid shakes her head. "He will punish them, surely, in His own good time!" she says piously.

"Yes, and they'll put it down to the Capitalists! Anyway, I'm glad you think they'll get it in the neck! I think so too. . . . Ingrid! What is the matter with Karin?"

I have put her off her guard. Karin intrigues

me. A miserable word, but no other describes the interest that Karin rouses in me. Interest? I hope it is. One never knows! It may be purely senile curiosity.

Sister Ingrid turns scarlet.

"I do not know what you mean," she says evasively.

"You know perfectly well what I mean! Tell me, if you like, to mind my own affairs, but don't tell me useless little white fibs! Can't you persuade her that no man is worth such martyrdom?"

Sister Ingrid raises her angular arms and lets them fall helplessly.

"It is a secret. Professorinnan would be angry if I told you. But Karin will never forget."

"It is something to do with her cousin, isn't it? I believe her cousin bagged her young man from under her very nose! That's the tragedy, isn't it?"

Ingrid turns purple and gurgles inarticulately.

"If you know, why ask?" she blurts out.

"Oh! So it is so! Poor Karin! What a beast the cousin must have been! But why did Karin let him go? I have seen a photograph of the cousin. Not a patch on Karin for looks; and a

most unpleasant character! I expect the man is sorry he was such a weak fool."

"I think he still loves Karin best. That makes it so hard for Karin. Men are so weak. They lose their heads for a moment, and then there is the long life in which to repent!"

"I don't care one hang how long they repent or how bitterly. It is their poor wretched victims, creatures like Karin, that gnaw at one's heart. . . . Will they persuade her to marry the bald-faced officer, Ingrid? I am convinced he does not love Karin for herself, but because she is such an excellent cook. It's a tummy-ache he's got—not heart-ache!"

Ingrid gives a shriek and flings her apron over her head. She rocks herself to and fro and cries "Oh! la! la!" at intervals. Lisa and I, by united effort, remove the apron. Ingrid wipes her eyes and smooths her hair and rearranges her cap, still giggling helplessly.

"You English! You mad English! What dreadful things you say!"

The telephone bell rings furiously, and Ingrid scuttles off to answer it, leaving me still sitting

on the rug, fending off Lisa. My heart is uselessly occupied aching for Karin.

The Swedes are a queer race. Torsten tells me one of his masters asked in class to-day who would like to see the downfall of England. More than half the class held up their hands. I wonder it was not the whole. Torsten says he is impartial —he throws out his hand in a magnificent gesture as he says it. But have we not always opposed small nations and cheated them? Did we not pretend to protect Denmark, and then we crossed the sea, bombarded Copenhagen, and stole her fleet? Alas! My history is shaky. I protest my ignorance of such a theft. Torsten threatens to bring his history-book to his lesson to-morrow to instruct my colossal ignorance regarding the sins of poor old England!

The sky was slate grey this morning. The trees in the town, covered with rime-frost, were a delicate shade of grey-pink. The snow was dirty-white. The whole effect of the Northern colouring was weird and dreary and in a minor

key. A house painted an anæmic pink peering through the laden branches of a rime-covered avenue of trees added to the strange effect.

The highest summit of the hospital early caught and reflected the rays of some invisible sun. They glowed a wonderful deep rose-pink, just for a few minutes, while my hopes rose, and then they became cold and grey and forlorn. There has been no further glimpse of the sun all this long, dreary, grey day—and it *can* be grey in the North, just as it can be pink, a pink atmospheric effect quivering with soft light and framed in a wedgwood sky.

Tuesday, February 8th

Shrove Tuesday. The boys have a holiday. I asked Torsten why. He said it was the last day before the fast begins, and, as everyone felt bound to lay in a good store of food, to help carry on during the next six weeks, people would not be able to move, much less think or learn.

Torsten—as thin as a rail. I cannot imagine

him ever eating himself comatose—but he has a pretty wit!

We had our Shrove Tuesday buns this afternoon for dinner. Thank goodness, I had been up in the high road in a white mist and was ravenous.

Dishes were brought in piled up with huge pale-brown buns. Glass dishes, with tempting squares of marzipan in them and jugs of hot and cold milk.

Torsten initiated me into the mysteries of preparation of a *semla*. A piece must be scooped out of the top of the bun with a spoon and a lump of marzipan fitted neatly into the hole. Hot milk is poured into the *semla*, and the plate then flooded with cold. It is excellent—but very filling. Some of the boys tackled and disposed of three!

The Professor has been away—on one of his sudden flights.

We all had a feeling that he might return tonight. At dinner we pricked up our ears at every sound.

Sister Ingrid had dreamt he would return unexpectedly. Sigvard "had a feeling," and Sigvard's premonitions often come true. After din-

ner, as we sipped our coffee in the salon, we watched every sledge that drove past with interest. No Professor, however.

It is simply, as Sister Ingrid says, that one hates to be taken by surprise when it is a question of the Professor's return. Everything must be cleaned and polished and just so.

I notice all the boys have had their heads freshly mown. Sister Ingrid, Karin, and I have each had a shampoo, and I have had a Marcel wave as well. My Finnish hairdresser Marcel-waves beautifully.

Sweden is flirting with Pussyfoot. I cannot, it seems, even procure a bottle of Odol because it has alcohol in it. Talk about the liberty of the subject! Would anyone drink Odol for choice? The childish restrictions of democracy make one tired.

One day, soon after I arrived in Sweden, walking up the high road with Professorinnan, we came round a bend upon a group of artisans standing by the roadside. One flung a bottle down on the snow, and then, seeing us approach, they ran off down a narrow path that led into the forest. Professorinnan hastened to the spot, picked up the bottle, and examined it.

"As I thought," she said. "They introduce ridiculous laws, and the young men who cannot get drink in a legitimate way buy hair-oil and apply it—internally—for the sake of the alcohol; or they brew some fearful decoction from wood-shavings and drive themselves mad. They fight and murder one another. Give them good, honest drink in limited quantities; so much more reasonable than prohibition."

She buried the bottle of hair-oil in the snow and marked the spot. "I shall pick that up as we return and take it to the doctor at the hospital. He is very anxious to stop this perverted form of drinking; it ruins the health and is punishable by law. I recognised two of the men, and, with the bottle as proof, the doctor can *strafe* them. He takes the law into his own hands up here and will make them rue the day they took to drinking filth."

We sought in vain as we returned. There was no trace of the bottle. The hair-oil had not succeeded in creating bubbles in the think-tanks of those young men.

They noticed Professorinnan examining the bottle, and they removed it.

Friday, February 11th

The first day of spring. Drip, drip everywhere. I went out in my fur cap and fur-lined coat and nearly died from heat.

The Northern lands have one great advantage over a Southern town. Once the snow is down, everything is so still. As I walked through the town it might have been a dream city. So silent, so white. To-day, had I shut my eyes, I might have been in a certain wood on Dartmoor where the streams trickle softly down on each side of the path. For the melting snow is doing more than just drip.

Snow-shoes have been abandoned for push-prams, and they swish past on the soft snow. The skating-rink in the town almost deserted. They actually have seats there with awnings. Whoever would want to sit in a Northern nip to watch skating!

This is neither a big nor a rich town, yet almost every woman possesses a fur coat and cap. Some —indeed, many of them—wear long coats of seal-skin! And the Swedes say that they are a poor race! Have they purchased them from the flee-

ing Russians? A Swede would love to spoil the Egyptian!

When the thickest snow is on the ground, when the roads are a sheet of ice, when there are ponds beneath the dripping roofs, and when one can sink up to one's knee, as I did to-day, in soft, slushy snow, when stepping to one side to make room for a jingling sledge carrying a top-heavy burden, the Swedes sport thin glacé-leather boots with high deformity heels! True, most of them have drawn goloshes over them, but still— I wear thick brown boots with rubber soles and heels; they raise me out of the damp, and they get a bite into the snow, thus making my slithering steps a little more secure.

The Swedes are so kind to their animals. Coming towards the hill this morning were a string of sledges; as each one reached the slope in turn, the drivers sprang from their perches and ran, reins in hand, by the side of the horses.

How much better behaved Swedish boys are than English—in *some* ways! I passed a secondary school to-day; there was a wildly exciting

snowball-fight in progress. Snowballs whistled across the road, aimed at the attacking force outside, who returned the fire with zest and spirit. As I passed I expected a snowball down my neck, but no. Nothing happened. No snowball even whizzed past my ear as a gentle hint as to what might have happened. I passed unmolested along that street, and so did a solemn-looking patriarch unsecurely perched on a hoist of logs on a ladder-cart. I do not think I could have resisted the temptation to heave a snowball at him had I been a small boy.

Sunday

The Professor is back. Things start humming at once. After dinner a huge wicker basket is brought in—presents for the children.

The Professor, looking dead tired, harangued me on the subject of Germany—her many virtues and her sorrows. He always returns from Stockholm primed to the lips with pro-German propaganda. They are queer boys. Though they have

not seen their father for five weeks and though he has brought them very handsome presents, they still retire to their separate rooms, after clicking their heels, bowing, and returning thanks.

I hear the Professor, tired though he is, talking ceaselessly upstairs in the hall. Sister Ingrid and Karin form his audience. Even the small children wriggle off on their own. No one in these self-absorbed days cares for the society of a great talker.

Thursday, February 17th

Horribly cold. Perfectly beastly wind; fifteen degrees below, Celsius.

At dinner the Professor asked who would go to see a Swedish film dealing with student life at Upsala. We all put our hands up. We drove to the cinema in open sledges. My face tingled with a thousand stabbing pin-points.

It proved to be a most interesting film, especially to the Professor. He saw the very house he used to board in, both inside and out. He recog-

nised an old professor he knew intimately, walking through the streets.

"Ah, the life! The life!" he sighed. "We work, we smoke, we drink, we love! And then—phut!—we are away, and fresh students come and take our place. They live the same life. They dream the same dreams. They think life is their oyster, and themselves the centre of the life-drama. They guess nothing of life's disappointments—and before they know it they are old, and have sons, as I have, almost come to man's estate.

"In two years Max goes to Upsala. He dreams the same dreams I dreamt. He loves and works and drinks. Ah! But a tragedy! I did not realise it till now. I cannot remember what I dreamt! At the time I felt I could never forget. If I could but remember it would be so much easier—easier both for Max and for me."

February 19*th*

Warm. Spring-like.

Professor and Bengt go off to Stockholm, one

for business, the other to join Max and Professor-innan at a health resort.

Sunday, 20th

Glorious spring weather; birds sit on trees and twitter: "Skis! skis! skis!"—but they are mistaken. It is much too warm for running on skis.

I went along the river road. Everyone in the town had discarded his furs and appeared again as human beings, having lost temporary resemblance to Teddy-bears, hairy golliwogs, etc.

Sister Astrid to dinner. She and Sister Ingrid plan to go to London, want of cash—*pengar*—being the great obstacle. Sister Ingrid's eyes fill with tears of longing every time she thinks of her dear London Hospital.

"But your East End," she cried, and held up her hands in horror. "No city in all the world can compare wtih London! There is no other slum in the world so vast, so wicked, so cruel!"

"That's all very well, Ingrid," I returned, challenging, "but no other country in all the world allows itself to be used as the dumping-house of all the filth, refuse, and disease of the world. I do not know what the statistics are. I have not the faintest idea. But when your faltering feet gingerly picked their way through the East End, I bet you anything you like that only one person in every six you met was British!"

February 21*st*

Real spring day. Birds up north road twittering and nest-building. Very warm. Sat on window-sill, both double windows wide open.

Torsten brought his Euclid book into my room to-night, and, instead of my giving him a lesson in English, he gave me one on Euclid. When, at last, I held my head in my hands and cried for mercy, he expressed surprise.

"My mathematical master said quite nice things about the English. He said you were all clear reasoners, good mathematicians."

I broke in hastily:

"Do not judge England, my dear Torsten, by one weak woman!"

I might have added: "It is not logical to imagine that England sends out her finest mathematical scholars to teach Swedish boys English. Nor do her clearest thinkers take on a job as governess if what they consider better jobs are within their grasp."

February 25th

Sister Ingrid and I started out in the sledge today. Bengt has departed south to the sanatorium and left his skis behind him. They must be taken to the expedition department of the railway—a long beetroot-coloured row of melancholy sheds.

On to the post-office. Sister Ingrid placed in succession three stamps on an envelope, and each in turn mysteriously disappeared. A new idea for collecting revenue—put no gum on the stamps! No Swedish stamp ever pretends to cling to an envelope. Somewhere in the higher branches of

the post-office someone must be pocketing vast sums of money set apart to pay for mythical pots of gum—pots which apparently never materialise.

Then to the dentist, heated rooms, double doors, double windows. It is so discouraging to open one door and to find yourself confronted by another. The waiting-room paper was at least restful—rough blue striped with grey. One table with magazines and papers loaded upon it. Four chairs. All the rest of the room was filled with palms, aspidistras, cactus, ferns.

On to the small cock-and-hen school. Valentin has not been behaving well. Dreaming in class again. Not attempting to learn his lessons, and objecting very strongly to having his peaceful meditations interrupted by senseless questions concerning geography and history. Trouble for Valentin! I feel it in my bones.

Home. Ravenous. Such a lovely day. Wedgwood skies and a white hoar-frost on the trees. The Professor told me at dinner to-night he had weighed himself, and his weight had gone up again. He must bant more. He watched me with horror take a second helping of meat pudding.

He said in his room after dinner:

"I grow old. I send home for coffee, hot, black, and strong, in the middle of my work. Soon it will be morphia, then cocaine. . . ."

I nearly said to him, "Let your figure go. Eat a little more and don't be foolish." But, after all, it is his funeral, not mine.

February 27th

I am so thankful—for once—that I am not of the male sex.

The Professor possesses superabundant energy, vitality, and excitability, partly due to an over-active brain and an inadequately nourished body. He is terrified of putting on weight and eats like a sparrow. The results are disastrous; he expects us to eat like sparrows. I am cursed, or blessed, with a very hearty appetite, and it grieves the Professor, not because he grudges me the food—heaven forbid!—but because he thinks sufficient nourishment tends to dull the brain.

He bursts into rooms at all hours. He will

return after twelve-thirty A.M. from a dinner-party in the town and arrive like an air-raid in each boy's room in turn. This morning he awoke in a perfect ecstasy of excitability. He aroused the whole household betimes. Everyone was running about, he at the head—and overhead: his room is just over mine. He charged into each boy's room in turn. Torsten always greets his visits with a chilling courtesy; I notice they never last long. At last I heard his tread go past my door. He was on his way to his own room—and work.

Then even the gang of smaller Bolshevists, who have inherited their father's energy, stopped storming up and down the staircase, yelling and stamping.

"There is peace in Warsaw!" for a time!

. . . . . .

"It is particular," as the Professor will say, when he really means "peculiar," what one perfectly sane nation will believe about another!

The Professor solemnly assured me to-night that there are three sexes in England. The third

sex dresses like a man, smokes cigars, and is to be seen, it would appear, only in the stalls of a theatre!

I have learnt that difficult art of refraining from contradiction—especially when a brilliant man makes an utter fool of himself.

"Where did you learn this interesting fact?" I asked curiously.

"It was in my paper," the Professor replied. "A Frenchman, who has recently visited England, saw these curious creatures in the stalls. When he returned to France he wrote an article for the French Press. It has been copied into our papers."

March 2nd

Professor tells me a wire has come offering him a post. I hope worthy of his talents. He means to accept. Hooray! I shall see something more of Sweden before I depart.

Torsten tells me of revolution in Petrograd.

March 4th

Snowed all day. White witches whirling in a grey world.

March 5th

Sunny day. Thank goodness! Clouds over. Grey again.

The Professor was taken ill last night and looked far from well this morning. Nevertheless, his indomitable spirit has carried him off to Stockholm.

I went to a supper-party at the hospital given by Sister Astrid. Sister Ingrid, Karin, a staff nurse, a doctor's wife—very sweet and Madonna-like—and two unknown quantities who never spoke a word, did not even whisper—and the brawny-armed gymnast. Thank heaven she had given the blue, purple, and yellow frock a miss.

They told one another childish stories—old chestnuts about professors at Upsala—and we played ducks and drakes along black draughty corridors.

Sunday, March 6th

Torsten in bed. I started reading him the *Red Hand of Ulster*. Torsten has been poured full of weird stories about the nobility of the aims of Sinn Fein. He was unconsciously converted to a more sane outlook on matters by this healthy, mirth-provoking book. I must find some book on India that criticises the English management of affairs out there just sufficiently to prove a useful bait. I think *The Broken Road* is the book I want.

March 9th

I have just heard that we are off to Stockholm in the summer. Professor full of plans and excitement. He returned from Stockholm in high glee.

March 10th

Great excitement—a dancer at the restaurant. Her pianist dined with us, weird and Bohemian,

with psychic eyes. The Professor had travelled up north with both of them. The pianist an old fellow-student at Upsala. The Professor, in his warm-hearted, hospitable fashion, invited both of them to dinner. The pianist accepted for himself, but refused for the lady. Just as well, perhaps!

Like many men in Sweden, our guest is a *divorcé*. Rumour whispers he has played his way into the amorous heart of a rich Countess. He certainly played divinely.

The Professor frankly expressed surprise that an educated man and a fine musician should travel round the country with a mere child of the streets, who has added to the shrewdness of the peasant the vices of great towns.

The Bohemian shrugged his shoulders with a smile—a crooked smile.

"Art," he said, "is a drug in the market in Sweden at the present time. I go off for a fortnight's tour with the *ballerina*. Misfortunes and failures have blunted my finer sensibilities. I look upon life merely as a grim jest. In that fortnight I am put to no expense; I travel about and see people and places in comparative comfort plus a few stormy scenes, and I return home with three

thousand crowns in my otherwise empty pockets. Is it not worth it—as things are?"

The hall was packed; it was too late to book our usual front seats, and as the seats were all on a level, we at the back saw very little. Just as well, judging by Sister Ingrid's blushes.

I caught a glimpse, now and then, of white, snaky arms waving, of a figure economically draped in tulle.

On our return, Sister Ingrid, the prim and strait-laced—before whom I had been laughingly warned by Professorinnan not to indulge in my usual levities in conversation—suddenly electrified us all! She who had never smiled during our first week of acquaintance! She who had been picked for her grimness and strict propriety of conduct to chaperon me and all the household in a world of scandalous tongues during the frequent absence of Professorinnan! Sister Ingrid, who thought that her mere attendance at a normally cheerful English service was brought about by the machinations of a tempting, luring devil; the woman who, taken off her guard, laughed uproariously over my tales, and then clapped a

shocked hand over her riotous lips—this woman suddenly sprang up from her prim, toes-turned-in attitude upon her chair, and began to wave her arms in snaky writhings, to bend and sway smirkingly, imitating, to the best of her ability, that lure of the world, the flesh, and the devil that she must have been studying that evening most attentively, though, to all appearances, with a coyly averted head.

March 12th

To-day Professorinnan returns. Great excitement. Flowers—lilacs and begonias in pots—are grouped round her bust in the Professor's room. There is a pleasant bustle and an atmosphere of excitement pervading the whole household.

We shall all be on our best behaviour; pupils will be examined as to their progress in English. Lisa is really beginning to talk a little, at last.

March 13th

Went for a walk with Professorinnan. She was in mourning and looked charming in a close-fitting black cap lined with white and a long veil.

On our walk Professorinnan asked me how I liked the life in Sweden. I replied politely if not effusively. She then begged me to stay on (I had only signed on for six months).

"Do stay on, if only until Christmas. Then you will see Stockholm. I will take you to Lapland in the spring, and you shall sleep in the *kåtas* of the Lapps."

. . . . . .

Everything dripping. The roads a rushing river or a perilous slushy swamp.

A man in the town was chopping with an axe, a small and diminutive axe, at the water, elbow deep, in the gutter. He looked like a Russian. He wore a high astrakhan cap, a black and white striped shirt, black baggy trousers tucked into high boots.

Another man, farther along, was digging out the snow with a curiously shaped spade resembling

a kitchen shovel, set at an acute angle to the handle, shovelling vigorously at the snow, heaving it up from one bank of snow to deposit it on another.

A tall, pretty Swede passed me by in a luxurious fur coat. She was accompanying a dachshund on its morning constitutional, and that dachshund loathed the deep, wet snow. He hated it so that he finally sat down on it and declined quite firmly to take one more step. She whistled, called, and caressed; the dog turned a deaf ear. He would not listen to his charmer, nor the dulcet strains of her voice, not even when she pleaded with him and called him by his Christian name—"Hans Wilhelm."

Professorinnan on her return from Korsteppen brought back Lilliputian samples of the clothes worn by the peasants there for Lisa's doll, and, with these as a model, she made Lisa a national costume to match.

Anything more excruciating! A close-fitting red cap, a crude orange frock, with long, wide, shapeless sleeves cut in one piece, concealing Lisa's lovely little hands and arms. An apron of striped yellow spotted with red. A white kerchief twisted

round the neck, rose-pink predominating in a chintz-like design. The apron fastened behind in a big bow of cotton ribbon, also striped and spotted. She carries with it a bag—black worked in red and orange and green hearts.

Monday, March 14th

Max for English lessons again, pinker and more blushing than ever. He had met such charming *Frökens* at Korsteppen.

. . . . . .

Torsten excused himself from an English lesson. He is writing a lecture to read out before the whole school, and has no time for superfluous accomplishments, such as sparring in English—the language of "luxury animals"!

. . . . . .

There is an icy—not to say glacial—atmosphere about the house-to-day. It is more of a whispering day even than usual. Nearly every sentence—

and there are not many—dies away into a low whisper or fades out altogether.

To put it baldly, Professorinnan has "the pip." I believe poor dear Karin is at the bottom of it all.

It is possible to break a strong man—sometimes. A weak person can be successfully coerced. But a persistently obstinate person, more especially when that person is one-idea-ed it is impossible either to bend, break, or move.

So it is with Karin.

The officer, the big, bold, bald-faced officer, must have "made her an offer," as my old nurse used to say when some young man made a fool of himself over one of my elder sisters!

And Karin has, again, turned a suitor down.

There is trouble for Karin *this* time. Obviously the pretty niece was sent up here to forget her sorrow in hard work, in the first place. Sorrow having passed away, as the grey, lowering clouds are blown upon by the frisky wind, Professorinnan was then expected to marry Karin off, speedily and advantageously.

Professorinnan—I will give her that much credit—has not put even her smallest finger into

Karin's matrimonial pie. She has done nothing except make her presents of pretty and becoming clothes, amongst others a high astrakhan cap, in which Karin, to my prejudiced eyes, looks simply entrancing.

The Professor has kept open house, and many young and apparently eligible men have sat at his hospitable board. Karin has been given every chance; and with downcast eyes and a little twisted smile she has refused to take any of these chances, even when they are thrust upon her by bald-faced officers or budding men of science. What would you? Karin clings to the memory of the rotter who jilted her. She dreams of him by day and sobs over him at night. It is her hobby to be melancholy. It is a much safer form of amusement than matrimony. Why can't they leave her alone?

A fringe of the black mantle of displeasure has fallen over my defenceless head. Professorinnan knows instinctively that all my sympathies are ranged on the side of her niece. I should loathe to marry a bald-faced man. When I danced with him I loathed the way he ogled me, and he felt unpleasantly stout and protuberant. I imagine, in

Sweden, when the time has come to "range oneself," badly shaped legs and prominent figures don't really matter.

I can't think it is quite fair for Professorinnan to be annoyed with poor Karin. If you cook for a household of eighteen persons or thereabouts, there is really no time left in which to fall in love. Professorinnan, and the Professor as well, drew high numbers in the matrimonial lottery. I cannot persuade myself that Professorinnan would have contemplated for a moment linking herself with an officer. They are most of them too self-satisfied and—whisper it low—somewhat empty-headed.

Saturday, March 18th

Captain X. came up to these wilds to give an exhibition in flying. The boys were delighted. Their admiration for his stunts *almost* carried them away. They excused their enthusiasm by informing me, each in turn, that Captain X. was really a Canadian, and that their masters at school

had taught them that all Canadians—English, French, and Italian—loathed the English and longed to join up with "God's Own Country" and to carry on under the "Star-spangled Banner."

The boys are very clever with their fingers. They manufactured this evening a school of aeroplanes and flew them out of the windows. The air was thick with them. Competitions, races, air-raids, followed in quick succession, and Torsten was appointed judge. The good airship *Bacchus* won every event. Some of the aircraft were a great success, some complete failures. They looped the loop, glided, sprawled, fluttered. Everyone talked, gesticulated, shouted together; the noise was deafening.

Only when Torsten raised his hand, shoved his enormous tortoiseshell glasses back on his nose, and shouted "*Tyst!*" ("Silence!") did they listen to reason. His word was the ultimate court of appeal.

Palm Sunday

Professorinnan off to Stockholm again.

Stamps for Torsten. He smiled and looked quite human for the first time for a month.

Monday, March 21st

Dinner at four. Pianist again, on his return from farthest North. Irma and Sister Anne to dinner to meet him.

Got to bed at one!

Tuesday, March 22nd

Breakfast in bed. Sister Ingrid brings it. She is off to the dentist—in great pain, but, as usual, sees to my comfort first!

The Professor, dead beat, retires to bed after midday. Up for supper again.

Professorinnan returns on Thursday. These Swedes think nothing of a long railway journey

with a night or so in the train. Captain X. gives another exhibition of flying.

. . . . . .

Torsten reveals at last the real cause of his recent unpleasantness. He has been living under a cloud of suspense.

It appears that about a month ago he was entertaining his comrades at school by a spirited criticism on religion in general, and the master whose job it is to instil it into their young sceptical minds in particular. He noted a sudden strained attitude on the part of his audience, swung round, and discovered that his audience had been increased by one—the "Christianity" master, as he calls him.

The boys said the master had been there some time. Torsten has been haunted by a vision of public disgrace, of being expelled, etc. He knows the master went straight to the *Rektor* and was closeted with him for some time.

He has just learned by chance that the master has since called upon the Professorinnan and never referred to Torsten's little homily at all. Said he was a brilliant scholar—one of their show pupils.

Torsten's relief is great. It has made him almost pleasant for the time being.

To be expelled in Sweden is a serious thing. It means possible ruin to a boy's career. There is but one high school for boys in ——. Torsten would have had to depart to another town and live in a boarding-house kept for schoolboys. There is only one boarding-school in Sweden apparently, as we understand the term in England, and there are no public schools at all. Sweden is democratic. The one big school where boys go as boarders is in the country, and it is kept, as far as I can gather, for boys too delicate for the wear and tear of a day school, or for boys too insubordinate to behave themselves at home.

Wednesday, March 23rd

Glorious spring day.

Maundy Thursday

Professorinnan returns. First day of holidays.

Good Friday

We had fried salted salmon for dinner, served with butter sauce and currants. Brown soup with little oat-cakes. Almond cream. Hardly Lenten fare!

Saturday, March 26th

There is a curious custom in Sweden in regard to the proper way to keep Easter Eve. At supper great bowls of eggs are placed on the table, dyed all kinds of startling colours, and they all sit round and see how many they can eat

The eggs are never eaten with salt, but with anchovies, sausage, cheese, sardines, etc.

Max managed to eat twelve eggs; their consumption did not seem to affect him unfavour-

ably. Sigvard polished off eight. I could only manage two.

We sat down to supper in fancy dress. Professorinnan was a Japanese with her hair brushed straight off her face, and decorated with knitting-needles. She wore a beautiful dark silk kimono and had blacked her eyebrows. She looked effective. Max was master of the ceremonies—very gracious, dignified, and courteous. Torsten had transmogrified himself into a fierce Bolshevist with a fiery nose. He acted the part splendidly. It suited him admirably! He interrupted, asserted, contradicted, and spouted speeches until we were all half dead with laughter. I am sure it was very unsettling to the eggs inside some of us!—but Torsten would certainly make his name as a comic actor!

Karin wore a crinoline sprigged frock and a poke bonnet lined with blue, trimmed with a wreath of blue and pink flowers, white stockings, little sandalled feet. She looked sweet. Sigvard posed as a girl, dressed in red, with a big picture hat. He looked a perfect beauty, and his brothers teased him unmercifully. He bridled and flirted. All the boys have the dramatic instinct very

strongly developed. Lars was a witch, and Lisa made a jolly sturdy little boy.

Little egg sweets were scattered over the table, guarded by fluffy yellow chickens. We ended up our feast and settled the eggs in our insides, with generous slices of saffron Easter cake, flat and round and stuffed with currants.

Monday, March 28th

Korkarlen!

The Swedish films are marvellous. This was first-class.

David Holm	Victor Seastrom
Fru Holm	Hilda Borgstrom
Georges	Tore Svennberg
Syster Edith	Astrid Holm
S. Maria	Lisa Lundholm

Much as I dislike the cinema, I would go any time to see a Swedish production.

The plot is taken from Hans Andersen's story. The last person to die on New Year's Eve has to drive round in the death-cart all the ensuing year to collect the souls that pass over.

Friday, April 1st

Lovely morning; walked with Professorinnan up north road.

Monday, April 4th

I went upstairs after lunch to help Sister Ingrid to cut up linen into strips to be woven into rugs. All kinds of beautiful little garments for children were to be sacrificed. Sister Ingrid held up her hands in horror at the waste, while tears swam in her eyes. Some of the cotton goods were so firm and strong that they were extremely painful to chop. A deep purple weal marked the joint of my thumb. I flung my scissors down.

"I am not going to slaughter any more innocents," I said firmly, "at imminent peril to life and limb."

Sister Ingrid looked at me in silent sympathy. She shook her head at me.

"It is my duty, however," she said grimly, and went at it again doggedly.

"Did you ever hear that virtue overdone be-

comes a vice?" I asked flippantly, as I jumped over Lisa's small snug armchair, and joined her, the Teddy-bear, and the golliwog in a riotous dance round the room.

Thursday, April 7th

Professor goes off to Stockholm.

I wish he would take me. I believe he would if I suggested it.

Friday, April 8th

I took Sister Ingrid out for coffee and cakes. She wanted cheering up badly after a second bout of rag-chopping. I bought chocolates for Lisa and Ingrid. The heat was simply overwhelming. I sat on the stoop outside the dressmaker's and waited for Sister Ingrid. The lure of the world, the dress, and the devil were too much for my pious little friend. She was so long inside that I had to race her home across the fields and even

then only just arrived in time to give Sigvard his lesson.

April 10th

Professor and Professorinnan returned from Stockholm. Professor took me out on the balcony at supper-time to see the perfect evening. Light until eight. Half night, half day now. Twelve hours each.

Sky in evening like soft sapphire of a velvet consistency. More like a scene on a stage than a real world.

April 15th

Supper in hall, all commanding doors open. Karin in bedroom winding wool. Professorinnan in high-back chair winding spools. Max reading. Astrid admiring placidly.

Enter Bengt in night-shirt, hair on end; sent back for bedroom slippers and to tidy hair!

Straining at a gnat, surely!

April 22nd

It is Grandpapa's birthday. Alcohol-free drinks for children. Results disastrous! In the hall a stiff parcel is brought in—a present from Grandpapa—tied up with string, in a counterpane. Professorinnan cuts the string and unrolls the counterpane wonderingly. Lisa inside, holding herself quite rigid. Yells of delight from all the boys. Lisa dances cakewalk on her own.

Sister Astrid arrives. Second counterpane parcel carelessly carried in. Professorinnan cries: "Oh, be careful, Max!" Goes down on knees to open parcel quickly. Only fat cushion inside. More shrieks of joy! I laughed till I cried.

April 25th

Lovely day. Wind wool out on balcony till nearly eight. Beautiful view over river to mountains beyond.

April 26th

Perfectly scorching day. I wander off through the garden, past the lake, into the fruit garden, where the strawberries are nearly ripe, across the brook into the shady wood. The skin is peeling off my nose and neck.

I went for a walk after supper with Karin and Sister Ingrid. Karin wearing a terrible white drill hat; even she could not look pretty in it! We climbed a hill for a view of the glorious sunset, red and purple, the hills round black and dark blue. Absolutely still. The sunset gaudily reflected in the river.

On our way back we met Torsten returning from his club!

April 27th

Professorinnan leaves two dressmakers and her weaving to take me to see a Swedish film featuring life up in the far North.

Up in the North a fire is always regarded as a signal of distress. Help must be sent at once.

A Swede touring in Lapland got hopelessly lost. Night came on and with it the piercing Northern cold. In despair, he gathered sticks and lit a fire to warm himself. It was twelve o'clock at night, and pitch black, but the Lapp dogs on the farther side of a wide river saw the blaze; they barked loudly and woke their masters, who promptly launched a boat and set out to investigate matters. They found the Swede half frozen, lifted him carefully into their boat, rowed across to their *kåtas*, and poured boiling coffee into him until he began to sit up and take notice.

When visiting Lapps, two points must be remembered—never to smile, and never to refuse refreshments that may be offered, more especially coffee.

. . . . . .

We ate our first strawberries to-day—home-grown.

April 27th

Busy nearly all day over the overhauling of clothes.

The moth of destruction lays her eggs in March, and so at the end of that month all the clothes, summer and winter alike, are carried out to the garden and mercilessly beaten—especially my new furs! Professorinnan seemed to take a marked pleasure in making the fur fly!

Ingrid and I joined in the fray; we beat and beat and beat until we ached, and then we crept backways into the kitchen to beg for a cool and refreshing drink.

April 28th

To-day the Professor announced that he will go to England for his holiday. To a quiet town for choice. He is quite worn out. I suggested Oxford or Cambridge.

April 29th

Sunny, but a wind like a touch of the North Pole.

In the garden this morning a peasant with big blue mournful eyes came sweeping the path with a broom. I was reading *Sagor—och Berättelser*, Hans Andersen.

The peasant spoke to me, asked me what I was reading, picked up the fat red volume. He turned over the leaves, examining the woodcuts with interest, then, closing the book, flung it with a bang back on the white painted table. It is Professorinnan's book, not mine, and it angered me to see it treated so disrespectfully.

His blue eyes blazed with fury—so, probably, did mine! He turned upon me and harangued me. My Swedish comprehension is practically nil, but peasants in many lands I have found easy to understand. He asked me why I led myself astray reading the stories of false teachers. The good old Bible-book, that was the book to read. Had I no Bible?

From under the budding trees where she stood, Professorinnan called to me:

"Do not fear. He is not all there, you know, but harmless!"

. . . . . .

A man came to supper to-night. A thin, ascetic face, the eye of a fanatic. He and the Professor sat and discussed the beauty of the Swedish language. The young man started quoting, and he did not know when or where to stop. The Professor sat, head thrown back, eyes fixed; one could see he was fuming with impatience. Every now and then a stealthy foot crept out and touched his wife's. She sat immovable, Sphinx-like. When the reciter's stock of quotations had all been spouted, he started on his life-story, and gave us suitable extracts—most interesting to him, no doubt. He had never entered a theatre or any public place of amusement until he was over sixteen years of age. Then he wandered by chance one day into the opera-house when *Madame Butterfly* was on the boards. His emotion bore him up to the skies. He was in heaven.

He emerged from the opera-house in a dream of ecstasy. He was not conscious of the solid earth beneath his feet. He returned home, and,

as he neared the threshold of his house, the fumes of *surströmming*[1] overwhelmed him, the *surströmming* he was to have for supper.

He fell from heaven to the perfumes of the pit.

Here the first day of May is dedicated to the goddess of peace.

I noticed a red flag wandering on its own wild lone—for the slope of the road hid the bearer—up the long north road that finally leads to Lapland.

They say there are only three bad Bolshies in Sweden, and two of these are Finns, the third being an Irishman! It is curious how the Emerald Islander still loves to trail his coat even when far from his own distressful country.

I do not know if Mike were the bearer of the flag. There was no music, neither the Red Flag nor the Green. I was too lazy to go and see what it was all about. Judging from the way the working-men about the place grinned sheep-

[1] Herring, cured in a special way, a very favourite dish in Northern Sweden. It is generally eaten on the verandah. The kitchen door, every door in the house, is flung wide open to rid the place of the pestilential fumes.

ishly, and rubbed the backs of their hands over their mouths, looking sideways at me the while, there must have been something irresistibly comic about that uncanny red flag.

The first day of May is fixed as the first day of spring. No matter what the weather, out must come the new spring hat. Professorinnan was annoyed with me because I had not purchased a hat to wear in the spring tra-la. I am afraid I was harbouring gloom. I did not feel very spring-like.

Spring in a normal year—over your ankles in half-melted snow, which plashes up to meet the falling rain. Skies grey and gloomy. The wind stabbing like charity.

But this year—blazing sun, dry roads, mosquitoes of a fierceness—cannibals! Skies at night the colour of turquoise.

And bonfire day! The day they burn out the winter! Just like the setting of an Oscar Asche play.

No one who has not lived through a winter in the icy North can realise the almost pagan worship of the arrival of spring.

Personally I was beginning to feel I could stand the gloom no longer, the grey skies, the dreary days.

A day or two passed— and behold!

The snow disappeared by magic, except in the hollow on the farther brink of the river. The roads are dry. The sun shines out fiercely. Trees are beginning to bud. Butterflies and bumble-bees are waxing busy about the scillas, the crocuses, and snowdrops.

On the first day of May, fires are lighted[1] on every hill. Down in the plain by the river they burn merrily. The Scouts have been busy building huge bonfires on the rocky range of hills to the north of the town. Pine and fir branches, piled up in the form of a pyramid, line the edge of the hill, ready at the given signal to illuminate the night.

In the days gone by, fires were lighted on all the farms and smaller peasants' holdings to frighten away the bears and the wolves that came down from their lairs in the forests during the long winter months, in their ravenous hunt for food. The cattle and the sheep were safely stowed

[1] Probably a pagan custom.

away in their stalls, immune from attack, but as the time drew near for their release the land had to be cleared of the enemy, hence the fires.

Nowadays, when the fires are lit, all the old rubbish of winter goes to form its pyre. Children are busy for days beforehand collecting the débris and piling it in a heap ready for the night.

Yesterday was an ideal first of May. The sky was a deep blue; there was a small puffing, eddying wind; but, as evening drew on, the wind and the few clouds passed away. We climbed the rocky hill (where the cranberries grew last autumn in profusion) towards nine o'clock.

Fires had already been lit in the plain. Down by the river, across a barrier of dark pine-trees, one could see the crimson and yellow flames leaping up through a soft veil of grey mist. Children's voices cheered in the distance; the town band, far away, blared and banged in the market-place. On the hill, men's voices joined in chorus, hailing the spring with song.

The students had donned their white caps—sure omen of the spring. They stood in groups on the summit of the hill, a little self-conscious,

chatting with their girl-friends, also white-capped and joyous.

Once the sun had really sunk, the air had a sense of ice and snow in its nip. It suggested polar regions, where the cruel cold reigns. Would they never light the big fire, so that there might be warmth and glow?

Suddenly a voice rang out. An order was given. A Boy Scout sprang forward on to a high rock, flaming torches of pine and pitch in his hands. The sparks whirled round his head, rained down upon him; indifferent to their sting, he carried out his task. In answer to his fiery signals, the Scouts came running, stumbling over the rocks and stones headlong in their haste. They formed up under the stern eye of the Scoutmaster. They marched up, surrounded the bonfire, and stood to attention, each grasping a modern version of the fiery cross.

The word was given; the pyre was lit. High up to the sapphire sky the yellow flame leapt in one long, eager column. A spiral of dense white smoke formed and twisted round the fiery pillar, which broke into a golden flame of dancing, shining fairies; it quivered, bent, and formed an arch,

dripping golden rain, while voices chanted, hurrahs cleft the air, and Boy Scouts stoked the glowing, crackling mass, their faces black with smoke, like small demons let loose from hell.

The crowd stood transfixed with emotion, silent and awed at the spectacle; the glowing, writhing arch against the sapphire loveliness of the sky, where low down in the west a bank of crimson and orange still lingered, fiery against the black masses of the mountains away on the horizon.

But how welcome the sudden fierce blaze of the bonfire! Half blinded by the glare, we turned away, to stumble down the dark rocky slopes. Home to drink egg-toddy—the national drink at supper on May-day.

May 8th

As soon as summer draws near, the boys start playing football, especially on Sundays, on the football field in front of the church. The band plays in the small park opposite, and the congregation pouring out of church divide their fa-

vours equally and impartially between the two distractions.

May 9th

Torsten came to my room to-night, primed to the lips with more inflammable matter against poor England! Do people in England ever sit down to wonder what they think about us on the Continent? Not our Allies, of course. There we are prepared for the worst. We can slip on our old gas-masks to keep off the sulphurous fumes. I mean the neutrals. The little ones in the nursery of Europe, the ones we thought too small and insignificant to be really spiteful.

May 13th

We are going away to-morrow to Örnsköldsvik for Whitsuntide.

May 14th

Up at four! With all the day before us, we must rise at four, because no other trains connect, and we have to change twice.

The journey proved long, slow, and uninteresting. We arrived more or less up to time and walked the short distance from the station to the big, bare hotel.

Sunday, May 15th

We went up the river, that flows into the Baltic, in a motor-boat. It was a lovely day, and rather rough. There was a lot of shipping about, which was interesting, and Örnsköldsvik is a place with lovely views.

We had an exciting adventure. A fool in a sailing-boat, trying to show off, landed his sail in the sea and smashed up most of his sailing apparatus.

The man in the boat was easily the clumsiest person it has ever been my fate to see and no desirable neighbour on a swiftly flowing river.

He nearly had us over, and, when we had finally landed him in safety, and the fat, flabby woman with him, they neither of them uttered one word of thanks, but stalked off towards a villa on the strand! The Professor asked our boatman who the scamp was, and was surprised and horrified to hear that the man was the editor of a newspaper! Every country gets the Press it deserves! Certainly Sweden is no exception to this rule!

In the evening we attended a football match between Finns and Swedes. They neither of them had much idea of the game, but that made it all the more amusing. Professorinnan had never taken any interest in football, knew nothing about the game, consequently criticised it, sneered at the interest the English take in football, and dubbed the game "vulgar." But who so excited as Professorinnan over this despised pastime! She cried out, "Well done!" "Hurrah!" "Go it!" etc. Her husband, less enthusiastic, could not get her away.

The Finns won!

So interested was Professorinnan that she hustled me off the next evening to watch a return match against the crack Swedish team. This was

much more exciting. It was a grand struggle. The Finns were finally beaten by one goal.

The crowd got frightfully excited. In the forefront of the crowd sat a fringe of small boys. They persistently intoned their war-cry: *"Heja!"* *"Heja!"* *"Heja!"* They must have been cross and tired and hoarse by the time the match came to an end.

Tuesday, May 17th

We came home by boat up the Baltic. I suggested it to Professorinnan, to avoid that awful train journey—starting at some ungodly hour. She jumped at my suggestion. A train journey with small children is no light proposition. Ingrid and I rather wished I had not had this brain-wave when the time for cool reflection arrived. We are both vile sailors—but it was a blue and golden day, and we had the boat to ourselves. We started at seven A.M. and got home at two P.M., quicker than the train and far more pleasant. We called in at queer, lonely spots among the numerous

islands, and we sauntered leisurely along in the wonderful clear, vivid, Northern atmosphere, warmed and cheered by the brilliant sunshine and as happy as larks.

BOOK V

May 19th

I HAD been feeling wretched for weeks. Suddenly I was laid low. A messenger was despatched post haste to the hospital; two nurses arrived with an ambulance; they injected morphia into me, and, semi-conscious, I was undressed, wrapped in blankets, and carried to the operating theatre.

As they wheeled me into the theatre, I remember distinctly the scared face of a small boy patient, holding one door open, peering with sympathetic terror into my face.

I knew the doctor at the hospital well. I knew there was no cause for fear in his strong, capable hands. So I winked at the small boy, without a qualm, as I went by, and the astonishment that wiped out terror and the broad grin that blotted out his astonishment were like the shifting scenes in a film. How sick I felt when I came to in my little white bed! I lay still, and wave after wave of nausea swept over me.

The nurse was a dear, and so was the funny little red-haired "pro." I did not understand one word in six that they said. We carried on our conversation by signs. I was thankful; I wanted to be left in peace.

The doctors arrived in force next morning. Five of them, all in a row, dressed in white overalls. Four men, one woman. They filed in and wished me good morning. Dr. B., who knew one sentence in English, smiled, clicked, and asked after my health. I replied briefly, as I knew he would not understand, and they all five bowed, smiled, right-about-faced, and marched out again.

I slept most of the time—or ate. They sent me up dainty meals every three hours!

I enjoyed my stay in the hospital. I received one mortal blow. Professorinnan told me that the doctor had vetoed our cherished plan. When Professorinnan starts on her tour in Lapland, I must be left behind.

The band plays once a week in the hospital grounds—the Guards' band. Never was a band so melancholy.

May 26th

Great excitement! The papers for the student examination have already been issued to all the schools in Sweden. (The examinations must take place in every school in the land on the same day and at the same hour, so that there may be no cheating, for every paper issued is the same.) To-day the results are to be announced, after each boy has safely passed his *viva.*

Groups of parents, quivering brothers and sisters, gather outside in the school yard. They carry in their hands the white student cap; the stick with silver crook tied up with ribbon that the boy may not carry until he is *student;* favours, in the shape of the cap, or a laurel leaf, or a stick, formed in flowers, to be sported proudly in the buttonhole.

There is an air of strained expectancy. The groups laugh and talk vivaciously, but their eyes are never still. Their gaze wanders ceaselessly upwards to a window a storey higher. At that window many hopes have been shattered, many dreams brought to naught.

Should every boy pass his examination, the

headmaster, surrounded by his satellites, appears at the window and throws it open, and cheer after cheer of relief and joy and pride rings out in the yard below; posies fly into the air, sticks are waved, and older students fling their caps up. To-day the headmaster approaches the window, looks out, and departs again. Someone has failed—perhaps more than one. Parents' cheeks grow pale with suspense; the laughter dies away. Anxious eyes fix their gaze on the doors leading into the yard. They open, and one by one the successful students appear, passing down the stone steps to the jubilant crowd of relatives below. The white cap is donned, the stick is grasped, the posies proudly tucked into buttonholes. There is a pause, and one small group on the outskirts of the happy crowd melts imperceptibly away with stealthy steps and bent heads, concealing as well as they can a brand-new white student's cap and stick. The wretched lad who has failed has crept out of the school by a back entrance, and, with sullen anger in his heart, a lump in his throat, and a flush of shame on his face, is seeking to reach a safe place of refuge, where he may wrestle alone with his sorrow and face the future.

Sunday, May 29th

Mothers' Day in Sweden. My breakfast tray is brought me wreathed in flowers—even the coffee-pot has blossoms twined round the handle.

June 4th

Torsten gives a dance. Torsten! Fancy! So frivolous.

Professorinnan and I spent our morning out in the garden, gathering masses of the pink-and-white apple blossoms that have so heavenly a perfume, just like syringa. We made our spoils into bouquets and wreaths for the cotillon this evening.

The national instrument is the concertina. A peasant lad arrived just before the ball opened, and he has been sitting shyly in a corner ever since, swaying to and fro as he waves his shrill concertina energetically in the air.

Torsten is tremendously taken with a demure maiden in blue. He is sitting at a small supper-table across the room, talking eagerly and spontaneously. He is neither ruffling up his nose in

scorn nor sniffing derisively. There must be something wrong with Torsten, or else it is a very bad case!

Lisa, aged four, has looked too long on the wine when it is red! Her cheeks are flushed, and she talks incessantly and is more impressive in manner even than usual. A few minutes ago she slid down from her chair at the table where Professorinnan and I are supping. She first tried to walk through a mirror and then bumped into every obstacle she met with, out of her course. Professorinnan watched her anxiously.

"What is the matter with Lisa?" she asked me in a surprised voice.

I pointed to her half-emptied claret-cup glass.

"Tired, I believe you call it," I said politely.

. . . . . .

It is painful to see Karin waiting for the arrival of the post.

She sits rigid and motionless. Even her ears are pricked, giving her an odd, Puck-like look. Her thin lips are pressed tightly together, so tightly that they appear almost white, while her eyes are fixed in a trance-like abstraction on the

flight of shallow stairs up which Marta will presently come with the post.

To be cut adrift from all one's interests in life. To be stranded up in this far northern land of snow and grim forest. The arrival of the post the only manna in this dreary wilderness; and to have to wait daily for that manna to fall until eight o'clock in the evening. What an existence!

To pass the long day strung up with hope; and then, just as bedtime is approaching, to have to face the bitter fact that the eagerly expected boon has not been bestowed after all! She receives a letter on an average about once a week. Poor Karin!

How she must crave for the solitude of her bare little room. To get away from hard, staring eyes, and from lips twisted into smiles of contemptuous disdain.

I can see Karin, her face buried in her pillow, lying with dry, smarting eyes and drooping lips, inert, hopeless, despairing. With nothing to look forward to, with only misery to look back upon, while her precious youth slowly drifts on into middle age and spinsterhood.

Karin, who adores babies! Whose existence is

limited within a border-line of domestic science, over which she has no ambition to step. She is just cut out for matrimony, and her mulish little heart is set on the one particular rotter who happens to be the husband of her cousin! What a tragedy in miniature!

And now, Ingrid tells me, the cousin is soon going to have a child. Ingrid tells me in her most intimate whisper, dying away into silence.

"And Karin?" I ask. "The child should by rights be hers! How dare this cousin strip poor Karin of everything that makes life worth living!"

Ingrid shakes her head.

"Karin! Karin is pleased! She comes to my bedroom last night and reads me the letter from her cousin. She is rosy and red. Perhaps it is that there will soon be another baby to coax and pet in the world. I do not know!"

Sometimes I am like Professorinnan. Karin's resignation and despair—they simply infuriate me. To my horror, I am hoping the baby will be born dead, so fierce is my partisanship for Karin. The tragedy of a still-born babe might prove to be the last drop of gall dropped into

Karin's brimming bumper of despair. I pray to be forgiven and turn my thoughts elsewhere. All the day through there is a heavy, lowering cloud on the horizon of my thoughts. I am growing almost as morbid as Karin. What's the good? Mine is a fighting nature. Hers is a football one. It must hurt to be kicked, unless one is positively a fanatic.

June 6th

The spring came so suddenly.

One day the snow was melting; the next day it had gone, except on the river's northern bank and down in a glade or two between high hills. And almost at once it seemed the cranberry-bushes were in flower; the curious black and white flowers were studding the wood with their blossoms, and a little delicate yellow-green fern was fighting foot by foot for territory against the encroaching cranberries. The pink, sweet-smelling linnæa, *slatterblomman*, *parnassia palustris*, *celgras*, and white marsh marigolds growing in the pond,

also the water-arum, were all coming into bloom.

And then the mosquitoes came. Such horrors! My legs are one burning bite from knee to ankle. Like the ancient Athenians, they rejoiced over something new, were it merely a change of diet —and I am sure I am not really as succulent as a nice well-covered Swede.

The birches came out, and the town is a bower of greenery. Quite pretty it looks; the pink and green painted houses peeping through lilac-bushes of a deep purple-red, apple-blossom and syringa.

June 6th is Flag Day here!

Not the kind of flag day when you are politely held up by smiling damsels in the street, but a day consecrated to the glorification of Sweden's blue and yellow flag.

I think it is almost the first time that Sweden has organised a Flag Day to impress upon her people the importance of the national emblem; judging from their behaviour, they are all a bit hazy as to its true significance.

The Professor has been asked to grace the occasion. The townsfolk could not have made a better choice. The scene of the revel is the peo-

ple's park in the town, and the Professor makes his speech from the bandstand.

It is not really a speech; it is a patriotic poem. He has spent days and nights, as his poor wife knows to her cost, composing it. He speaks so clearly and distinctly I can understand nearly every word. He looks such a *pukka sahib* standing there, in spite of—to British ideas—his weird clothes! Most of the men standing round look so animal, and the officers are always so stiff and self-conscious.

As I stand alone, admiring the Professor, a massive Swede passes and re-passes, staring. I note his glare, but I do not budge one inch; if he summons up sufficient pluck to address the strange *Fröken*, he will receive the shock of his life. Secretly I hope he will. I should love to teach one of these self-sufficient Swedes a lesson. Alas, as he comes round again, primed with fell purpose, Professorinnan, who has had one eye upon him all the time, steps up to me at the crucial moment and baulks him. He raises his hat in confusion as he catches the look in her cold eye. Professorinnan is a power in ——. She says no word to me; I say no word to her; but we both

know that I nearly caught a Swede tripping, and that she butted in just in time to save the national face!

As the Professor finishes his spirited address, a lot of men in the coveted white caps of the student storm the bandstand. They break out into the newly-acquired Swedish national anthem, and the Professor lifts his hat high in the air.

As the song starts, the Colonel of the regiment looks round, smiles lazily, and lifts one plump white hand slackly. There is no smart coming to the salute. People stare open-mouthed at the Professor; why does he stand in a draught with his hat off? A plump-faced youth passing a group of small boys sweeps off their velvet-peaked school-caps with one vigorous movement of his arm. They stare after him in amazement, whispering among themselves—and then drag their caps on again over the backs of their little shaven crowns. They obviously have no idea what it all means. The national flag, the national anthem, simply convey nothing to their minds. Perhaps one does not love the flag of one's country until one has fought for it. Hence the attitude of the Labour conchies in England towards their coun-

try and that country's flag. They do not like to remember the time when they sheltered behind women's petticoats, betraying a flag for which they were too cowardly to risk their lives, while braver and better men fought and died.

It was cold. Bitter. And all our furs have been beaten, shaken out, left in the sunshine, and then stowed away for next winter. I feel the cold much more acutely in the summer than in the winter. The idea that it is really summer is not sufficient to keep me warm.

I hailed the warmth of the restaurant with joy. We arrived at eight for supper and only quitted it as the lights began to go out one by one at eleven-thirty. The lights made no difference really. They merely served as a gentle reminder—or hint. Outside it was broad daylight. The sun was sinking gently to the north.

June 11th

To-day Professorinnan offered to take me to a military wedding. It was to take place at eight

o'clock in the evening. The car was ordered at seven-thirty. Professorinnan hates weddings, and was going only to oblige me. When we got there, we found she had mistaken the hour. The wedding had been fixed for seven-thirty.

The doors of the church were locked. One door leading up to a gallery was open, but the gallery was packed with a gaping, chattering audience, and I could only catch a glimpse, here and there, of blue and orange uniforms and some little boys in white sailor suits.

We were on the point of departing in despair, when the doors of the church were thrown open to permit two guests to escape. Professorinnan made a sign to the verger, and the latter, bowing deeply, held the doors for us to enter.

The ceremony was just ending; the bridal procession was coming down the aisle.

First came little boys in white sailor suits, escorting little girls in white with pink wreaths on their heads. Then came the bride, wearing a golden crown, side by side with her groom, short, dark, and most unsoldierlike in his ill-fitting sloppy uniform. He held the bride's hand as if they

were about to start dancing the minuet; stiff and angular they both were.

The bridesmaids followed—each with an officer in a bright Reckitt's-blue uniform, hand in hand, all angles. The officers bowed stiffly to their lady friends in the congregation, who curtseyed back with many giggles.

The bridesmaids ogled and simpered—rather blatantly, I thought.

The guests trooped down behind the bridal procession. The women wore extremely décolleté evening frocks, and their hair was stiffly Marcel-waved and bound with tinsel coronets, ribbons, wreaths of flowers, etc. The few civilians present wore evening dress.

The officers collected in a group outside the church. Fine, upstanding men some of them. They wore gilded helmets, and from their crests plumes of coarse horsehair streamed. They had flung grey homespun capes picturesquely across their gaudy uniforms.

Putting their fingers to their foreheads in salutation, gazing straight into one's eyes, with the curious fierce Swedish glare.

June 12th

I accompanied Professorinnan to the station today to bid a friend farewell.

Before the war, in Sweden most people donned their very best clothes and travelled second class. None but a *Gulasch* (profiteer)—the man without honour in his own country—ever travelled first.

We still don our best clothes, but we travel third, and the tobacco fumes we meet are of the same class. The smell of one's wardrobe for days is unspeakable.

All the world and his wife had come to speed the pretty parting guest—with flowers, a pretty custom but a nuisance—and they were wearing, one and all, such beautiful boots. I have never seen a badly shod Swede.

To resume—with the flowers and cheers! Ra, ra, ra, ra, ra, and again ra! It seems to me lacking in good taste and courtesy—not to mention tact—to call out ra, ra, at the top of your voice when you are seeing a guest—or even a friend—off at the station.

It would have been to me such a relief in the good old days in England to have been—sometimes—as honest as that, but I never dared!

All the schoolmasters to dinner—in my honour.

The headmaster came first—of the genus rat, fair, dictatorial, petty. Snodgrass was there, pink-and-white and third-rate, keen on sport; the kind that requires no strenuous training, that demands no hardship and perseverance; the chase of the punchbowl; the hunt after that willing victim—woman. Then a scowling Judas Iscariot kind of man, who bowed with chagrin and barely touched my languid fingers. An erect figure followed, hair *en brosse*, padded-shouldered, swift, dapper in his movements. The last, looking like an old sea-dog, short, sturdy, with a red, weather-beaten face and a square-facing, steady regard. My heart went out to him.

We filed in to dinner. I sat between the old sea-dog and the padded-shouldered man. The latter opened fire at once, in the truly Swedish way:

Our public schools were admittedly a failure. They bred class-pride and inefficiency! We were

taught no languages—games, sport, all day long; and what was the good of games? Sheer waste of time!

Our Universities. Only a rich man could afford to send a son to Oxford or Cambridge. What snobbery! Such a state of things would never be suffered in Sweden, the democratic. Anyone could become a student provided he possessed sufficient brain.

"You teach no Latin or Greek at your Universities (!) You English are a semi-educated race. You can speak no tongue but your own. But you are on the downhill. You are degenerate, *passé!* America is the coming race, after Germany. We seek our fortunes in America, never in England. Swedes are very popular in America. They know in us the super-man!"

I seldom rise, unless I know my facts, but here I saw a chance to behave in Sweden as the Swedes do. So I riposted:

"No doubt you are right! I have never had the chance of visiting America. But in Norway I met an American, a manufacturer on a large scale. He told me he had made a rule never to employ Swedes. *His* experience of Swedes taught

him that they were always laying down the law and neglecting their work. On the other hand, in his factory, a good job could always be found—for a Norwegian!"

That was a nasty knock.

As for foreign languages—we had no real need to learn the European ones, at any rate, for every other nation realised the importance of learning ours.

I had, however, attempted to make some necessary enquiries in French, German, and English on my journey up north, but not one official apparently knew any language but his own.

I then proceeded to rub in the fact that many of our young men in England must master numerous dialects and strange tongues in order to be in a position to help run our vast dominions.

"This would, naturally, never occur to any of you," I sneered (may I be forgiven, under strong provocation!), "as Sweden is practically limited to her own sea-borders."

When the various wonderful *linguists* seated round that dinner-table had had my speech *translated* for them into Swedish, I was not popular!

One man, Judas Iscariot, broke out into a long

tirade, glaring at me across the table. He sat quite still, only his thick lips moving. I expected at any moment he might spit at me. My sea-dog bristled all over and growled at him, and then the Professor rose to his feet and harangued the table vehemently and at length.

Judas sank back in his seat white and snarling, shooting evil glances full of venom at me. The Professor sat down, picked up his glass, and drank "*Skål.*" Professorinnan kept her eyes fixed on her plate. I could see she was annoyed. I think with her husband.

"What was it all about?" I whispered to my sea-dog.

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"That fool," he said tersely, "was saying rude things about England and the English—even of you. I told him to shut up. He knew nothing about the country or the people. Then the Professor spoke to him sharply. Told him if he did not know how to behave he could leave the table and the house. He would not have an honoured guest insulted. I have lived in England. I have been in English ships—in German too. Had I been a younger man I would have

fought for England in the late war. *'Skål'* to England!" He leapt to his feet.

The Professor did the same, also Professorinnan. All the guests at that table had to rise to their feet. The schoolmasters—oh, bitter pill!—had to join in the toast with the best grace they could muster!

When the dark man slouched up to say goodbye, I gazed at him, head erect, with a pitying smile. I bowed stiffly and ignored his clammy, outstretched hand.

June 13th

Breaking-up time. The boys are wild with joy. It is the "gym" display to-day. The necessary white duck jumpers and trousers have not put in an appearance. Violent ringing up on the telephone.

I started off betimes to have a shampoo. Then I had to find the "gym" hall, and my hostess, in the seats reserved for big-wigs.

I found her in the front row, as usual, the

headmaster seated urbanely by her side. He got up as I approached, clicked, and bowed, then resigned his seat to me. I thought it very polite and courteous, but, when the bigger boys started to jump over the horizontal bars, I found that about half an inch was the distance the authorities had allowed for safety between the nearest spectator's head (my own) and the clumsiest jumper's foot. No wonder the headmaster, who probably knew the ropes, had been so willing to sacrifice his seat!

The white trousers had arrived, had apparently been turned out by the dozen, and not one pair fitted. The performance was not so smart as I should have expected in Sweden, the land of perfection in physical drill. The "gym" master, an infantry captain, looked very chic in his dark-blue uniform, gold epaulettes on his shoulders, dapper and spruce, but there was a touch of the tar-brush —at least eighteen annas to the rupee, I thought. His fiancée—he has already been engaged twice before, but there is luck in odd numbers—sat and devoured him with admiring eyes; it was obvious that the vanity of the nigger and the soldier throbbed tumultuously through his veins.

At nine-thirty to-night Sister Ingrid came to my room to tell me that there was a wonderful rainbow to be seen to the south-east, like an enormous triumphal arch in the sky, high and wide. I must go to the Professor's room to get a really good view.

I slipped on my flowing kimono; gathering it round me and donning a boudoir cap, I set out along the passage.

As I opened the door of the Professor's room I gave Max the shock of his young life. He was buried deep in the Professor's pet chair. He had gathered together every cushion in the room. He was obviously studying the tree of knowledge of evil, for he whipped behind him the book he was perusing so eagerly and buried it out of sight under about ten cushions, blushing furiously and forgetting in his panic to spring to his feet and click.

"Oh, là, là, Max!" I cried, advancing upon him and shaking my finger at him. I slipped my hand reassuringly under his arm. "Was it awfully interesting? May I share your studies? No? Well, look at the rainbow, green, pink, and yellow, and at the sky behind, as lurid as the literature you peruse!"

June 14*th*

The real breaking-up day. We are all on tiptoe with excitement. I am allowed the proud privilege of attending any examination I choose to select (*viva voce*), together with the relatives of the boys. The flappers, looking as bold as bulldogs and as brazen as idols, enjoy the time of their lives.

We wander from class-room to class-room as our interest takes us.

I attended Sigvard's German class. The door was chock-a-block with flappers, giggling and ogling. Each time a boy made a perfectly hopeless howler, the master turned despairingly and in dumb show to the crowd buzzing round the door. The boys looked sheepish; the girls never turned a hair, but peeped up under their eyelashes at their swains and made faces at the self-conscious master behind his back.

I had promised Max to attend the English class held by the "Cock"—the padded-shouldered reprover of our various national failings; to raise my eyebrows in stupefaction at his English and to smile disdainfully; to take a leaf out of a

Swede's book of manners, in fact. A crowd of boys came to find me—the hateful "English miss" —to escort me to my seat. But my sense of justice—a British quality no Swede will acknowledge —made me ruefully recognise that his English was so good that I had no occasion to pantomime. The curious details he imparted as to Cromwell's private life rather took my breath away, especially as one boy insisted on describing Cromwell as the "Grand Old Man."

The master still insisted on the Continental superstition that we call our most cherished meal the "five o'clock." But, taking it all in all, his intimate knowledge of our country, our customs, and our language was awe-inspiring.

In the evening a final (I hope!) farewell dinner-party. The guests arrived at six-thirty and departed at twelve. Of all the cheerless, dull, uninteresting methods of passing time! Why does anyone dine out in Sweden, I wonder?

The dinner was excellent, of course—but afterwards. It is considered bad manners to sit down directly after dinner, so we all stood up and juggled with coffee-cups, liqueur-glasses, and cigarettes. I stood until I was as weary as a lady-

in-waiting at Court and felt varicose veins forming in both my legs. I seized an opportunity to escape, was missed, chased, hauled back, and bribed to remain with cherries and melon. Finally determined to avenge myself for unmerited boredom, I set to work to empty a glass bowl full of chocolates. By the time I had accomplished my self-appointed task *smörgås* had been brought in.

Still no one made a move!—though the arrival of the *smörgås* is generally regarded as a tactful intimation that guests may begin to think about departing.

In despair (twelve P.M.) the hostess took her guests, well wrapped up, into the garden to look at her flowers—broad daylight, of course.

I sat and gazed down a long vista of rooms into the open door of the Professor's room, where the men were playing bridge. The Professor, to cheer up the party, read an "In Memoriam" poem of his own composition. He fixed one wretched woman with his eye and wagged a finger at her as if to keep her awake. He then produced an enormous portfolio containing the masterpieces of his children—drawings, letters, attempts at poesy, etc. One elderly lady half rose in her chair, supporting

her solid weight on her elbow, and gazed despairingly down the vista of rooms at the bald patch, just visible in the doorway, on her son's head. In vain. His attention was riveted on the cards in his hand. He took no notice. The Professor had secured another victim. She was a quick-change artist. Her expression of absorbed, amused, vivacious interest when her host glanced up at her, the swift revolt to a resentful boredom as his eyes returned to a treasure-trove, afforded an instructive study in feminine psychology.

June 15th

I walked home behind Lars to-day. He and a friend were tugging at a wooden cart on which was perched a rabbit-hutch with several rabbits inside it.

The Professor has a fixed tariff for payment-on-results reports on examinations. Lars had done well in English, thanks to my persistent prodding. My efforts have procured him at least one of the rabbits, probably the hutch as well!

As I passed him, he greeted me cheerily in my native tongue; the other boy stared aghast at such proficiency!

"Swank, Lars!" I cried derisively, and he grinned back at me, blushing up to his prominent pointed ears.

June 16th

The King and Queen are coming. There are many fearful rumours about Bolsheviks and revolutions circulating round. Desperate characters are reported coming north from Stockholm or crossing over from Finland, Russia, and Esthonia. The big wood-works here are closing down next week. The high rate of exchange in Sweden is knocking all export trade on the head. An agitator has been caught and popped into the prison. The giddy Colonel says a Bolshevist rising is imminent. The Royal visit is to be put off.

June 18*th*

Battle of Waterloo! Torsten offensive on the subject! Won by the Prussians! We ran away!

June 19*th*

Went for a twenty-mile (three Swedish miles) walk up the interminable road through the forest. It pelted. Professorinnan and I, Torsten and Sigvard. Far up on the road we turned to the right through the dripping forest. The flowers were lovely.

I pictured the north of Sweden barren and dreary and cold. We have, on the contrary, a fine hot summer, though a short one. The sun scorches. I have blisters all over my hands, having exposed them, without gloves to protect them, in the wood.

The tender yellow-green of the grass and the small ferns in the forest. I have never seen such a shade of green in England. The grass grows long and luxuriantly. One can almost see it grow, for does not the sun shine now all day long and

all night? The atmosphere feels well-aired, though there is a distinct nip in the evening.

We followed a narrow path studded with great rocks; we slid about on the mud and fell against the stones, and the water splashed from the ground, mingling with the steady downpour, and swished hissing round our ankles; but none the less we reached our goal, an artist's wooden fishing chalet, perched high on a rock in a wood by the side of a big silent lake. The artist was not at home, so we scribbled our names and our messages on a card and pinned it upon the door. We ate a damp lunch under the portico and then plunged down into the soaking undergrowth and turned our steps homewards.

We picked bunches of flowers in the dripping woods; small, waxen, sweetly perfumed flowers rather like the Grass of Parnassus; linnæa, the flower the Scandinavians love so much, named after the great botanist who discovered it—falling on his knees to thank a good God for all the beauties so graciously squandered; and masses of the strong-smelling *pors*, a kind of myrtle, with its handsome dark-green leaves and its clustering head of small lovely white flowerets.

June 20th

Every day I must attend a parade, to be curtseyed and bowed to. We are practising for the great day when the Royalties will arrive.

Lisa nearly made us die of laughter. She suddenly grew bored with it all; as a game it possessed no further glamour for her. She announced quite decidedly that on mature reflection she did not think she would curtsey to the Queen after all.

June 21st

Longest day, shortest night.

The boys sat in the hall, busy greasing boots—for Lapland, alas!

We supped on the balcony. The sun shone brightly, casting long, level beams on the woods, the river, and the hills beyond. Long shadows raced northwards.

June 22nd

I went to the Customs to-day. The room I am beginning to know so well was chock-a-block. The bear who rules the roost was there, and with him at least twenty salty sea-dogs, bearded and moustached. I entered nose-in-air. There fell an icy silence on the room and its inhabitants. In a clear, calm voice I demanded the handing over of my parcel. The salty sea-dogs gasped at me and then gaped at the bear. He sat rigid, aghast, with his mouth wide open. That a woman should demand instant service when twenty-one real men and true were deeply occupied with affairs of State! It seemed to him incredible. He rose stiffly from his seat and escorted me back to the door, his face a study. He was too much flabbergasted to put me summarily in what he considered my true place. It was all I could do to retain my Vere-de-Vere pose. I felt an absurd inclination to pull his solemn beard and to laugh in his horrified face.

I wonder what he would have done? Spanked me, I expect.

June 23rd

Midsummer Eve is a public holiday, a day of universal rejoicing.

A maypole had been erected in the grounds of the hospital. A huge wooden cross, with a garland of foliage twisted round it. All the children and most of the grown-ups joined hands in a ring, and swung and swayed and circled, singing, as they moved, Swedish folk-songs.

There was an old man sitting apart, with a fine, sad face. He fancies he is God, that it is his mission to punish the people of the earth. He is about to destroy England, Russia, Germany, Sweden, Africa, and America. Next week is fixed for the event.

Another lunatic, a tall man dressed in hospital grey, a jaunty yellow straw hat balanced carefully on the extreme side of his head, strode up and down, pausing every now and then to cast a fearful glance over one shoulder. This grim figure stalked continually behind the laughing, singing ring. Two horrible skeletons at the merry-making.

After dinner we sat upon the balcony, watching the long shadows creeping nearer and nearer to

the river, the island, and on to the black mountains beyond.

At ten-thirty we started forth in broad daylight, and, after lingering to feed the rabbits *en route*, we clambered up the steep hillside, picking, as we went, linnæa, ferns, cranberry blossom, and a small white waxy flower, smelling like syringa and decorated at the top of its stalk with many tiny bells, like a hyacinth. We finally arrived at the crest of the hill. Though the sun did not go to bed that night, there was a nip in the air.

We waited.

Across the wild heath, studded with sour grass, juniper bushes, and grey rocks, a dark belt of pine-trees stood, black against the radiant sky—grey, with bright crimson cloudlets spreading out in long, soft lines. Behind the trees there lay a golden bar. The sun was lurking there, wondering whether it were worth while to creep into his warm golden bed—just for an hour or so. But he decided against it. Was it not Midsummer Eve, and were not great things expected of him? Nay, now it was already Midsummer Day. The clouds glowed a deeper crimson; there were flecks of blue to be seen. The far-away streak of gold

grew softer and rose higher from the horizon. The sun was stretching himself and waking to the drowsy consciousness that a new day had begun and that there was work for him to do. He peeped up over the distant wood, and long shadows came creeping, creeping, from the farther side of the trees.

I have seen the sun at midnight. Now I can die content.

As we wandered back, some of the sisters were out in front of the hospital, picking flowers.

I am sitting at my window, gazing out at the blue sky, streaked with crimson and flecked with grey. Towards the north I can see through the trees the yellow glow of the sun.

All the inhabitants are up and out. Away in the distance the shrill cry of the concertina, where people have gathered on the high hills above the river. The birds are busy serenading one another; the mosquitoes are seeking a late supper; down below, on the interminable road that winds through the forest up to Lapland, the shriek of the road hog can be heard now and then, as motors distantly thunder past.

The lilacs and honeysuckle are blooming.

Daisies, buttercups, and sorrel dance and sway in the long grass.

The grey clouds are changing to a soft pink. The scarlet of the begonias in the flower-beds stands out in startling contrast to the vivid yellow-green of the grass.

A wagtail is dancing expectantly round a bush.

June 24th, Midsummer Day

Early this morning it seemed to me that the family were preparing for a Professor-hustle.

The small people were stampeding noisily up and down the wooden staircase, indicating that the untiring Ingrid has her attention riveted on things of greater importance.

Doors banged, voices called.

The rioting increased to the proportions of a revolution. Still there was no calling the insurgents to order. No Karin either. She occasionally glides into the *mêlée* when Sister Ingrid is out or otherwise preoccupied, to restore order by her wraith-like appearance.

Things were getting serious! Valentin's school-hour was approaching! As he is so backward, the "*priester*" is coaching him these holidays.

Where in the world was Professorinnan? The mere sight of her standing there, just staring without uttering one single word, would quell any commotion within her own household, and probably out of it as well.

A scurry of footsteps. Ingrid's harsh voice raised in expostulation, answered by a babel of childish voices. In a few moments the herd trooped past on their way to early coffee.

I heard the rattle of cups and saucers, the shouts of early morning greeting as Marta came in from the kitchen with the coffee-pot. Karin might be there or might not. She was so silent one could never tell. . . . Someone must have a headache. Perhaps Professorinnan was in bed. Ingrid was hushing the brats. "*Tyst!*" I heard her hiss, almost ferociously.

Gradually the clamour died away. I saw Valentin run past my window down the avenue of birch-trees, the satchel on his back bumping encouragingly, as if urging him on.

Lisa and Olavus Petri came fussing importantly

into the garden; they ran down the drive towards the lodge, as if despatched to convey a message to the lodgekeeper.

Then there came a brusque knock at my door.

"Come in!" I called.

The door opened slowly. Ingrid stood grimly on the threshold. I could see by the marks of tears on her rugged face that something was wrong.

"Professorinnan says, please do not wait for her. She is having coffee in her room."

Ingrid edged in sideways like a crab, as is her way, and, closing the door carefully, stood with her hand upon the latch, as if ready to depart again.

"Professorinnan has had bad news. She has just heard. Karin's cousin is dead."

"Dead!" I exclaimed. "Dead, Ingrid! What killed her?"

"The baby!" Ingrid whispered huskily.

"Karin's baby!" something wicked inside me exclaimed triumphantly. I do not know which was the more shocked by the remark, Ingrid or I!

"And they have telegraphed for Karin!"

Ingrid added, coming closer and peering at me closely through her horn-rimmed spectacles.

I went up to Ingrid and took her needle-scarred fingers in mine.

"Ingrid, I can't say I'm sorry! You know what I think—have always thought. My heart is filled with joy for dear little Karin. I always loathed the cousin, though I never saw her. Now Karin is coming in for her own at last. I am so glad!"

Ingrid shrugged and turned towards the door.

"You English always say what you think! And yet they say you are hypocrites! I dare not say what you have said!" She pressed down the latch. "I am glad that you said it! . . . The car is here at the door. Will you bid Karin—God-speed!"

So Karin has escaped from her hell, and is now on her way to her temporary heaven.

Long may her lum reek!

(1)

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